

# History

## In The Making

Political Essays on:  
America, Israel, Afghanistan.

Suren Khirwadkar



# Contents

\*

1. Dedication

2. Introduction

3. *Les Miserables* Storm the U. S. Capitol

4. Israel's quest for safe and peaceful homeland

5. Afghanistan: Its past has buried its future

\*

For

Padmaja

11.12.1946 - 02.12.2015

If I have seen further,  
it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.

Isaac Newton  
1642-1727

## Introduction

I am fascinated by politics: national and international, by political science and political philosophy.

My studies at Holkar College, Indore and later at Northwestern University, Chicago, taught me the subjects well and inculcated a passion that continues to burn bright. My travels to and stays in the U.S., Europe, Africa and Asia helped broaden the mind and sharpened understanding.

Google and Wikipedia are two great universities, who through internet have made information and therefore, knowledge accessible to all as never before, in history. I sincerely acknowledge my debt to them for making the research for this book not only possible, but enjoyable.

The great publications like The New York Times, The Washington Post, The New Statesman, The Guardian, The New Yorker and many others have facilitated easy acquaintances with the learned *pundits* like Fareed Zakaria, Tom Freedman, Richard Haass, David Frum, Paul Krugman, George F. Will, Ross Douthat, David Brooks and many others. Like *Eklavya*, I shall always be grateful to these *Dronacharyas* for the knowledge and wisdom imparted by them.

This book is my tribute to my late wife, Padmaja, who encouraged me throughout life to be a better person. I am deeply thankful to Surekha, Jit, Abhi and Partha for their valuable suggestions.

I would also like to record the wonderful support from Anagha Karhade and her team, who have made this project a reality.

Suren Khirwadkar: Pune, January 2022

\*

*Les Miserables* storm the US Capitol,  
The Decline and Fall of America

"We live in a deeply divided nation.  
If you think things can't possibly get worse,  
Trust me, they can."

Michelle Obama

17 August 2020

\*

"When America's two tribes go to war, things certainly get worse."

Edward Luce

21 August 2020

\*

"US democracy is in peril"

Joe Biden

31 May 2021

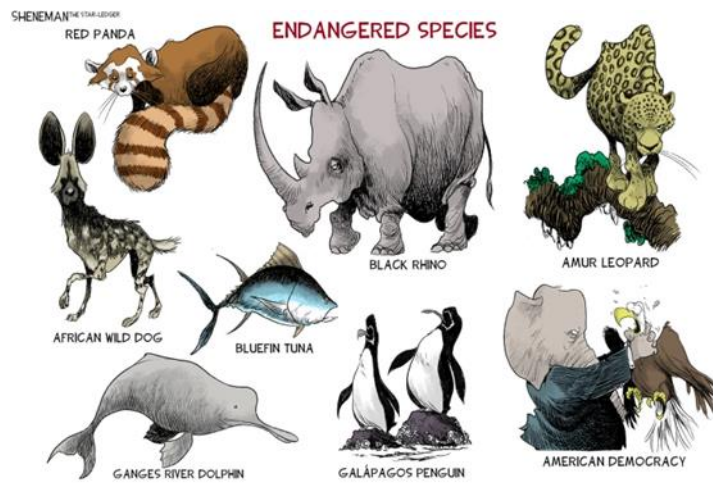
\*

"American Democracy Isn't Dead Yet, but It's Getting There"

Susan B. Glasser

May 27, 2021

\*



Credit: syracuse.com, editorial cartoons, June 6, 2021

\*

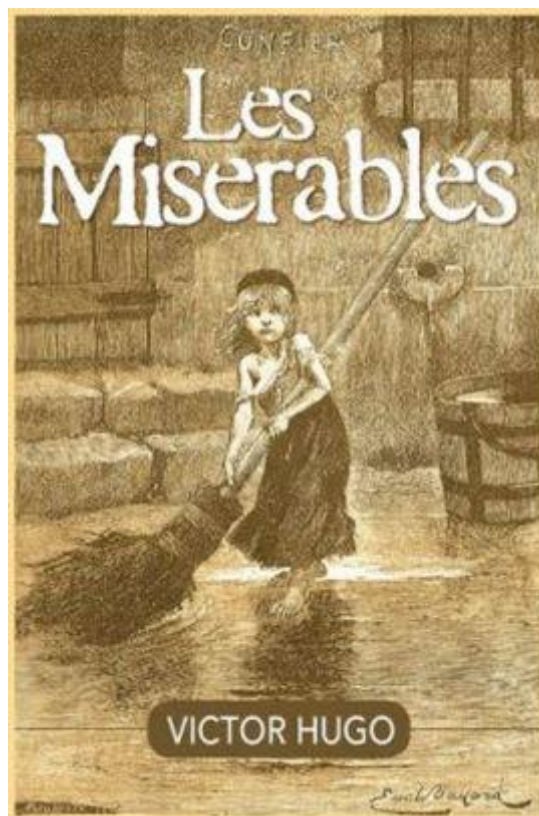


Credit: Drew Sheneman, The Star ledger

## *Les Misérables* storm the US Capitol

### The Decline and Fall of America

Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* was published in 1862 to great acclaim; it is hailed as one of the greatest novels of the 19th century. Hugo himself was self-deprecatingly confident of its success: *"So long as ignorance and misery remain on earth, books like this cannot be useless."*

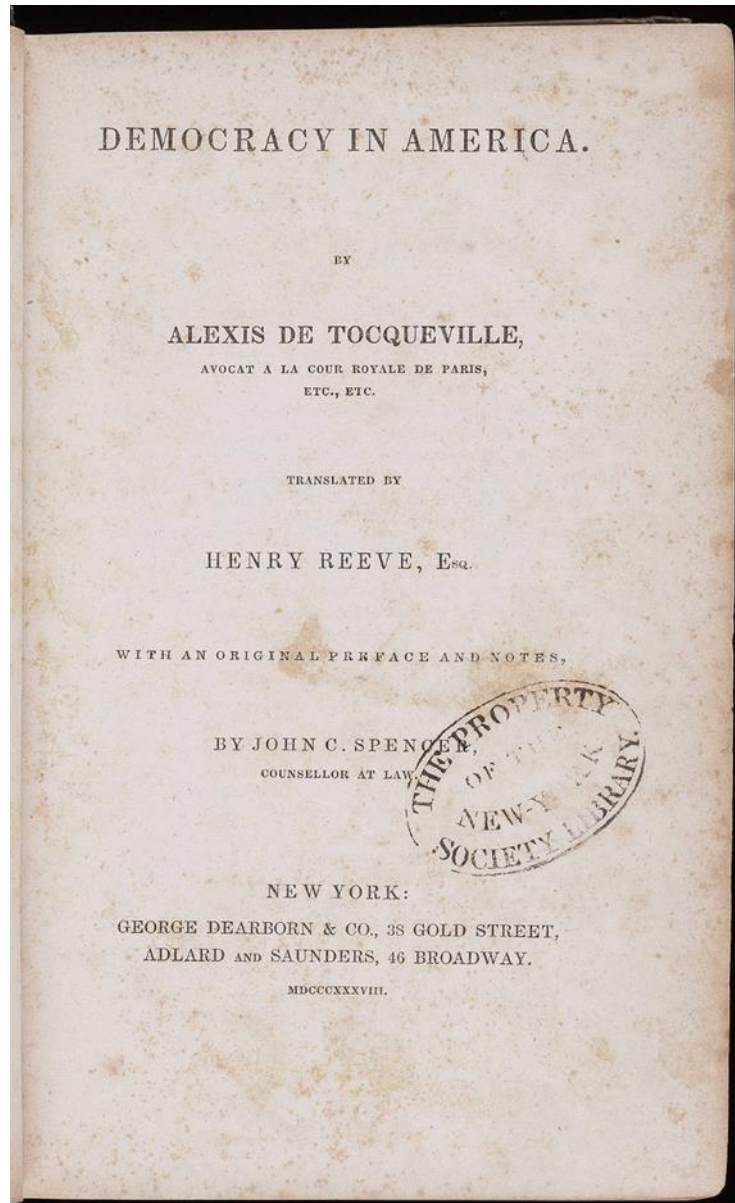


Credit: Beulah Public Library, Beulah, North Dakota

The Bastille was stormed on 14th July 1789. Its capture symbolized the end of *l'ancien* regime; within a few years, the monarchy was abolished and Louis XIV and Marie Antoinette were sent to the guillotine.

The U S Capitol was stormed on 6th January 2021. While there were recorded instances of violence at the Capitol in the 19th and 20th centuries, this event was clearly the most severe assault on the majestic building since the burning of Washington by the British army in 1814.

Alexis de Tocqueville, French sociologist and political theorist arrived in America in 1831 to see what the great republic was like. Sharp observation helped produce, 'Democracy in America', a great work of political writing.



Credit: Wikipedia

Among his most quoted observation is: *"There are many men of principle in both political parties in America, but there is no party of principle"*.

The storming of the US Capitol by the Trumpists is at once a sign of the times and a glimpse of the shape of things to come. To many, it marks the beginning of the Decline and Fall of America.



The US Capitol

The crowd that stormed the Bastille on the morning of 14th July 1789, was armed with muskets, swords and various makeshift weapons. Qualitatively, it was not very dissimilar to the mob of Trump supporters that stormed the Capitol building on 6th January 2021. Most of the about nine hundred insurgents in Bastille that day were craftsmen and shopkeepers; some 40% of the insurgents on 6th January 2021 are estimated to have been business owners.

A credible estimate of the total size of the crowd that stormed the US Capitol cannot be ascertained because aerial photos are not permitted in Washington D.C.;

however, when around 800 protesters entered the Capitol building, the Capitol police commander, following the S.O.P. formally declared it to be a 'riot'.



Photographer Lev Radin, Credit: Sipa, USA

|

And just as the Military Governor of the Bastille, Bernard-Rene Jordon de Launay and his 114 troops were unable to control the rioters, the U.S. Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund and his 114 (history repeating itself!) deployed troops (out of the activated 340) retreated and the rioters entered into the Capitol building within two hours of the start of the insurrection.

While General Pierre-Augustin Hulin and Captain Stanislas-Marie Maillard led and participated in the assault on the Bastille, the man who led the storming of the US Capitol from its vicinity was none other than the highest political authority, the President of the USA.

As per the result of the Presidential Election announced on 3rd November 2020, Democrat Joe Biden defeated Republican Donald Trump in both the popular vote (81.3 million or 51.3% to 74.2 million or 46.8%) and the electoral college vote (306 to 232).

After the declaration of the election results, Trump waged a 77-day campaign to subvert the election through legal challenges and when they failed, he resorted to extra-legal means. Trump through his lawyers, filed more than 60 lawsuits (including two in the Supreme Court). When these were rejected for lack of

evidence or standing, he began to pressure Republican Governors, Republican Secretaries of States and Republican-controlled State Legislatures to nullify the official results, by ‘creating’ evidence. At one stage, he even contemplated invoking Martial Law.

The last straw on Trump’s back was when Vice President Pence, perhaps for the first time, defied his master’s wishes and released the official letter to the Congress on 6th January 2021 confirming Biden’s victory.

That was a direct challenge to Trump who on 18th December 2020, just four days after the electoral college had voted, had called on his supporters to attend the planned rally in Washington on 6th January 2021, tweeting, *“Be there, (It) will be wild!”*



Credit: reuters.com

According to the New York Times, Trump personally oversaw the details of the rally, including the speakers’ line-up and the music to be played.

On 5th January 2021, a meeting was held at the Trump International Hotel in Washington DC to give final touches to the preparations; attendees included Donald Trump Jr., Eric Trump, Michael Flynn, the retired Lt. Gen., and ex-National Security Advisor and Corey Lewandowsky, Donald Trump's former campaign manager.

Christopher Miller was appointed Secretary of Defense when Trump fired Mark Esper on 9th November 2020. On 4th January 2021, despite a specific request from Washington D.C. mayor Muriel Bowser, he prohibited deployment of D.C. guards with weapons, helmets, body armor and riot control equipment, without his personal, specific approval.

The 'Save America' rally took place on 6th January 2021 at the 52-acre park, the Ellipse, adjoining the White House. Trump, Giuliani and others addressed the crowd. Giuliani typically, called for "*Trial by combat*". Trump's sons Don Jr. and Eric attacked those Republican Senators and Representatives who were not supporting the efforts to challenge the electoral vote and threatened to campaign against them in future elections.

Trump himself in the Rally speech, full of violent imagery, stated that he would "*never concede*" and called on his supporters to "*walk down to the Capitol*" and that he would walk with them (although he did not). He called Biden an "*illegitimate president*" and added, "*if you don't fight like hell, you are not going to have a country anymore.*" For emphasis, he added, "*you will never take back our country with weakness. You have to show strength and you have to be strong*", assuring them that "*you are allowed to go by very different rules.*"

Trump used the word 'fight' twenty times and only once used the term peace as in 'peacefully.'

The mob that stormed the Capitol included Republican Party officials, political donors, far-right militants, white supremacists and conservative evangelical Christians. There were also the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, QAnon, and national-anarchists, as well as neo-Confederates and Holocaust deniers. After the event, members of the Nationalist Social Club, a neo-Nazi street gang, detailed their participation in the storming and claimed the acts were the 'Beginning of the White Revolution in the United States'.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to conclude that the mob mainly consisted of the far-right militias and militant organizations. An academic analysis reported in The Atlantic magazine found that of the 193 people so far arrested for invading the Capitol, 89% had no clear public connection to established far-right militias, known white-nationalist gangs, or other militant organizations. "The overwhelming reason for action, cited again and again in court documents, was that arrestees were following Trump's orders to keep the Congress from certifying Joe Biden as the Presidential Election winner.' They were older than participants in previous far-right violent demonstrations and were more likely to be employed; 40% were business owners. The researchers concluded that these 'middle-aged, middle-class insurrectionists' represented, 'a new force in American politics—not merely a mix

of right-wing organizations, but a broader mass political movement that has violence at its core and draws strength even from places where Trump supporters are in minority.’

Some military personnel also participated in the riot; an analysis by National Public Radio has shown that nearly 20% of defendants charged in relation to the attack served in the military; (in the general population, the average is 7%). Also, at least 39 law enforcement officers are suspected of participating in Trump's pre-riot rally, or joining the Capitol riots, or both.



Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn

Credit: businessinsider.com

Former National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, under former President Donald Trump, was asked at the For God & Country Patriot Roundup conference in Dallas on 31 May 2021, by a member of the audience, *"I want to know why what happened in Myanmar can't happen here,"* Flynn, who is seen as something of a celebrity in the QAnon universe, responded, *"No reason, I mean, it should happen here. No reason. That's right."*

In sharp contrast to Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn’s response was the characterization of the attack on the US Capitol as the “Reichstag moment” by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen Mark Milley. He is believed to have told his aides, Donald Trump was preaching “the gospel of the Führer”, according to an excerpt from ‘I Alone Can Fix This’, by Carol Leonnig and Philip Rucker of the Washington Post.



Gen. Milley at the Senate hearing on September 28, 2021

Credit: The Guardian

Leonnig and Rucker report that Gen. Milley spoke to an “old friend”, who warned the general that Trump and his allies were trying to “overturn the government” in response to Joe Biden’s election victory, which Trump continues to characterize as a fraud.

Milley is reported to have said: *“They may try, but they’re not going to fu\*\*ing succeed. You can’t do this without the military. You can’t do this without the CIA and the FBI. We’re the guys with guns.”*

Continuing with his analogy of Hitler's Germany, Milley called Trump supporters "Brownshirts", saying, he believed that long before the Capitol attack, *"Trump was stoking unrest, possibly in hopes of an excuse to invoke the Insurrection Act and call out the military"*.

General Milley is known for his independent views and according to New York magazine, he stoked the right-wing ire some months ago, by defending teaching about historic racism in army educational establishments.

In her 2016 Presidential Campaign, Hillary Clinton expressed her concerns regarding Donald Trump and his supporters. In her August 25, 2016 campaign speech at a rally in Reno, Nevada, Clinton criticized Trump's campaign for using 'racist lies' and 'taking hate groups mainstream and helping a radical fringe take over the Republican Party'. In an interview on 8th September 2016, on Israel's Channel 2, Clinton said: *"You can take Trump supporters and put them in two big baskets. There are what I would call the deplorables- you know, the racists and the haters, and the people who are drawn because they think somehow, he's going to restore an America that no longer exists."*

Clinton elaborated that the 'other basket of people' consisted simply of those *"who feel that the government has let them down, the economy has let them down, nobody cares about them, nobody worries about what happens to their lives and their futures, and they're just desperate for change. It doesn't really even matter where it comes from."* She added that to Trump supporters, he seems to hold out some hope that their lives will be different.

The question is: Have the 'Deplorables' as characterized by Hillary Clinton morphed into *Les Miserables* of Trump?



Credit: fortune.com

In one of the final issues of National Journal (December 2015), John Judis explained the reasons for the stunning support among Republicans for Donald Trump. Trumpists, he wrote, are comprised mostly of a demographic of 'Middle American Radicals,' a term invented in the 1970's by another Donald, the sociologist Donald Warren. What defined Middle American Radicals was the conviction that 'the middle class was under siege from above and below,' wrote Judis. They were white populists, nationalists, and they were convinced, they were getting screwed by both the rich and minorities.

However, the recent data on Trump supporters reveals that they are not really Middle American Radicals. In fact, they are not middle class at all. Rather, they are working class. This fits in not with Donald Warren's ideas but with those of another sociologist, the late Seymour Martin Lipset who coined the phrase, 'working class authoritarianism.'

So, who are Trump's fans? They are far less likely to have a college degree and they also make less than \$50,000 annually. They describe themselves as 'conservatives' and see in Trump, 'the staunchest champion of the white working class that American politics has seen in decades' says William Galston of the Brookings Institution.

According to Seymour Lipset, 'authoritarian pre-dispositions and ethnic prejudice flow more naturally from the lower classes than from the middle and upper classes.' (These were the people who formed the base of the Nazi labor unions). Lipset continues, 'working-class groups have proved to be the most nationalistic and jingoistic sector of the population. In a number of nations, they have clearly been in the forefront of the struggle against equal rights for minority groups, and have sought to limit immigration or have tried to impose racial standards in countries with open immigration.' In this, they are aided by their predilection to be more authoritarian, and once recruited, 'they are not alienated by the lack of democracy.'

At the same time, we must recognize that not all of Trump's supporters are working-class whites, and not all working-class whites are Trump supporters.

This is where psychology comes to the assistance of sociology.

In a paper published in the Journal of Social and Political Psychology in March 2017, Professor Thomas Pettigrew argued that five critical factors can help explain the extreme loyalty of Trump's supporters:

1. Authoritarianism

Authoritarian personality syndrome - a well-researched global condition- is a state of mind characterized by belief in total and complete obedience to the authority.

Those with this syndrome generally display aggression toward outgroup members, submissiveness to authority, resistance to new experiences, and a rigid hierarchical view of society. The syndrome is often triggered by fear, facilitating path for leaders who exaggerate threat or fear-monger, to gain their allegiance. President Trump's speeches, which include absolutist terms like 'losers' and 'complete disasters,' appeal to those who prefer authoritarianism.

## 2. Social Dominance Orientation

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) - which is distinct but related to authoritarian personality syndrome - refers to people who have a preference for the societal hierarchy of groups, specifically with a structure in which the high-status groups have dominance over the low-status ones. Those with SDO are typically dominant, tough-minded, and driven by self-interest. In Trump's speeches, he appeals to those with SDO by repeatedly making a clear distinction between groups that have a generally higher status in society (White), and those groups that are typically thought of as belonging to a lower status (immigrants and minorities).

## 3. Prejudice

It is a well-known fact that the Republican party, going at least as far back as Richard Nixon's 'southern strategy,' used strategies that appealed to bigotry, by delivering speeches with 'dog whistles'- code words that signaled prejudice toward minorities, signals that were designed to be understood by racists but not others.

While the dog whistles of the past were more subtle, Trump's dog whistles can sometimes be shockingly direct. He has routinely appealed to bigoted supporters by calling Muslims 'dangerous' and Mexican immigrants 'rapists' and 'murderers.'

## 4. Intergroup contact

Intergroup contact refers to contact with members of groups that are outside one's own, which has experimentally been shown to reduce prejudice. It is important to note that there is growing evidence that Trump's white supporters have experienced significantly less contact with minorities than other Americans.

## 5. Relative deprivation

Relative deprivation refers to the experience of being deprived of something to which one believes one is entitled. It is the discontent felt when one compares one's position in life to others, who they feel are equal or inferior but have unfairly had more success than them.

When one looks at the sheer size of Trump's support in the presidential election of 2020, it becomes abundantly clear that both sociological and psychological

explanations are inter-related and mutually supportive. Trump won 74.2 million, or 46.8% of the total votes cast underlining the fact that Trump may have lost, but Trumpism has not.

As Sacha Baron Cohen, the intelligent comedian summed up in all seriousness, in an interview to the Guardian, *“Trump got 10 million more votes than he received in 2016. America has a hugely aggrieved section of the population and that can be amazingly dangerous. In Germany post-World War I, a huge section of the population also believed in the Big Lie.”*

Anne Applebaum noted in the 5th January 2021 issue of the Atlantic, Trumpism has nothing to do with Economics, nothing to do with Foreign Policy, nothing to do with lobbyists or the business of government at all. The true nature of Trump’s ‘ideology’ lies elsewhere: in the construction of alternative realities that make him an eternal winner, even in situations where, objectively speaking, he has lost. His slogan ‘America First,’ actually stands for ‘Trump first, always and above all else.’

The appeal of this ideology is not economic, but psychological. Millions seem to be convinced that when Trump wins, they do and when he loses, they do.

Everything else is a side issue, irrelevant to the more important contest: the winner will be the one who can best sustain the fantasy of endless victory. That - not democracy, not prosperity, not freedom, and not equality - is what Trumpists want.

Before Trump, most Americans weren’t especially passionate about politics. But Trump’s *modus operandi* has been to force people to become passionate about him – to take fierce sides for or against. And he considers himself President only of the former, whom he calls “my people”.



The Trump Family

Credit: vix.com

Trump fought the election with no political agenda except to feed his gargantuan ego. In a sense, his base energizes him. Its adoration sustains him. That and the antipathy of his detractors. Politicians in high position usually try to appease their critics. Trump likes to offend them. *"I do bring the rage out,"* he told Bob Woodward in 2016.

His entire election platform was based on sharpening the dichotomy of 'We' and 'They'. 'We' are the people who love him, the Trump Nation. 'They' are the residents of the 'Anti-Trump nation' who hate him and have cheated him of his hard-fought victory.

To Trump and his supporters, the laws of the Trump Nation empower him to do whatever he wants. Anti-Trump Nation's laws constrain him, but they are illegitimate because they are made and enforced by the people who hate him.

American conservatism once meant some definite beliefs and policies. You could argue with them, admire them, or hate them. But they were very much there, to discuss and debate. Roosevelt, Hoover, Coolidge, Truman, Reagan, Baker and many other leaders might not have been deep thinkers, but their Republican party had clear lines of differentiation which were presented and seen as alternatives to Democratic party's liberal ideas.

Most of those ideas were predicated on some basic beliefs about human beings themselves, including the conviction that intellect is a better guide to action than emotion, that tradition is valuable, and that religious faith is a cornerstone of a healthy society. On policy, too, the conservatives moved along broad but common lines. They believed that incrementalism is better than sudden change, that America is exceptional, that patriotism is honorable, and perhaps most important, that government is a necessity to be controlled, rather than a teacher to be revered.

Republican thinking, especially, *laissez faire* economics at home and an assertive foreign policy - were based on ideological foundation that made Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, to say that the GOP *"has become a party of ideas."*

Now, the Republican party has no ideology. Now, Trump is the Republican Party. George Will has opined that the Republican Party in 2021 has become a 'political party defined by the terror it feels for its own voters.'

Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor, wrote in the Guardian on 8 November 2020 exultantly, "It's over. Donald Trump is history".

He spoke too soon.

Judging by the number of ballots cast in the election, Trump's base of support is roughly 70 million. They were angry even before the election, now, they are angrier.

Republican Party today is run by a kleptocratic businessman: Trump might be able to avoid prosecution, but he is likely to be exposed as the most corrupt president in American history who presided over a scandal-ridden administration, in which many of his closest advisers are serving prison time and many more may join them.

His administration not only consistently failed to uphold established judicial and semi-judicial norms, but consistently repudiated them. Its efforts were centered around the unabashed pursuit and abuse of power: power as an end in itself, justifying any means. Political corruption usually transcends financial corruption and what the Republican party has done in the last few years makes political corruption very dangerous. It strikes at the heart of democracy and at the roots of the Republic. It destroys the compact between the people and the government.

Today's Republican Party has more than any time in its history, older, whiter, more male, more rural, more conservative voters. Voter fraud is party-agnostic, but the Republican Party has passed laws to limit the franchise in ways that are simply breath-taking.

Taking away democratic rights - extreme gerrymandering; blocking an elected president from nominating a Supreme Court justice; selectively paring voting rolls and polling places; creating spurious anti-fraud commissions; misusing the census to undercount the opposition; calling lame-duck legislative sessions to pass laws against the will of the voters - is the Republican Party's main political strategy, and will be, for years to come.

Republicans have accepted that unlike the Democrats, their party isn't a coalition of interests. Its character is ideological. The corruption of the Republican Party in the Trump era has set in, with breath-taking speed. When it was faced with a choice between democracy and power, the party enthusiastically chose power. Trump and his supporters don't see a dilemma, democratic principles are after all, disposable tools, sometimes useful, sometimes inconvenient. The higher cause may be conservatism, but the highest is power.

'Can American democracy survive Donald Trump?' Sarah Churchwell asked in her opinion piece in the Guardian, on 21 November 2020. 'Lying, paranoia and conspiracy are defining features of a totalitarian society' she said and added, 'What hope is there in the aftermath of an administration that has relied on all three?'

Sarah Churchwell quotes the historian Richard Hofstadter, who in 1964 identified the 'paranoid style in American politics', a perspective that shaped the stories

Americans too often told themselves. Paranoia offers a master trope for interpreting ‘the sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy’ in American political narratives. Hofstadter predicted that paranoid energies would periodically be released in America when ‘historical catastrophes or frustrations’ exacerbated the religious traditions and social structures that fostered those energies, catalyzing them into ‘mass movements or political parties.’

Churchwell continues, ‘If Trump is symptomatic of America’s diseases of power, then his compulsive dishonesty might be the most revealing pathology of all. The US is a chronically untruthful country, deceit written into its very framework. The constitution contains explicit protections of slavery but never uses the word ‘slavery’, a deeply mendacious deception that eventually became a collective self-deception. The declaration ‘we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal’ was written by a man who enslaved men he did not consider his equal, and became the foundation of a country that incessantly declared its belief in truth and justice while enslaving and oppressing much of its population.’

*“I WON THE ELECTION!”* Donald Trump tweeted in the early hours of 16 November 2020, 10 days after he lost the election. At the same time, Barack Obama warned bombastically, ‘the US is entering into an epistemological crisis’, a crisis of (not) knowing ‘what’s true from what’s false.’



Credit: skynews.com

Fraudulent histories and distorted conspiracies rely on misinformation and tireless repetition. QAnon, the far-right conspiracy movement routinely pedals the line

that a cabal of Satan-worshipping, pedophilic sex-trafficking Democrats has been plotting against Trump. The New York Times reported last year: 'At Christian nationalist gatherings and strategy meetings, the Democratic party and its supporters are routinely described as 'demonic' and associated with 'rulers of the darkness'.' Republicans no longer oppose Democrats politically: they are opposing them existentially.

Half a century after Richard Hofstadter identified the 'paranoid style in American politics', America produced a president who embodied the paranoid style, proclaiming at every turn that investigations into his allegedly criminal activity are 'witch-hunts', that elections were 'rigged' against him, while spinning false conspiracy theories as camouflage, so that none of them seem real, or all of them do. In an increasingly incomprehensible world, the bewildered audience arrives at a point where they believe everything and nothing, thinking that everything is possible and that nothing is true.



Credit: amazon.com

Some of the religious traditions feed into political paranoia. Paintings of Trump in the hands of Jesus that circulated during his presidency struck non-believers as absurd (not the least because of the profanely immoral life he leads), but were admired in all seriousness by the devout. Trump's attorney general William Barr is a crusading religious zealot, avowing the centrality of Christian nationalism to American life. He has said the 'moral order' of the United States can only be based on 'a transcendent Supreme Being', a belief that leads to Trump and his politics.

Trump's presidency was seen by many as symptomatic of the ills entrenched in the American body politic: divisiveness, rage, greed, puerility, truculence, fragility, narcissism, paranoia and so on. Trump's exceptionalism is quintessentially American: the rules apply to everyone but him. Trump is the embodiment of America's worst qualities.

Perry Bacon Jr. is one of the several American political thinkers who is very worried about the state of America. 'American democracy is in even worse shape than you think', he wrote in the Washington Post on May 20, 2021.

He believes the US has four huge problems and he does not have solutions to any of them. These are: the Republican Party, deep polarization between the parties' supporters, the greatly weakened and strongly partisan institutions and finally, the moderate factions in both parties either do not appreciate the present danger or do not care about the consequences.

The Republican Party after the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol has continued its anti-democratic actions based on exaggerated and misplaced white grievances. He sees a Republican-controlled House attempting to impeach Biden in 2023 and 2024 on any pretext, exacting revenge for Trump's two impeachments. If Republicans win the governorships of Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin next year, taking total control in those key swing states, they could impose all kinds of electoral barriers for the next presidential election. The Republicans are laying the groundwork to refuse to certify a 2024 Democratic presidential victory if the GOP were to win a House majority.

Republicans are poised to take a lot of undemocratic actions at the state level, where they have total control in 23 states. Republicans elsewhere plan to gerrymander legislative districts the way they have been done in Wisconsin, where it is now virtually impossible for Democrats to win a majority in either house of the legislature!

Georgetown University historian Thomas Zimmer says, "America won't be much of a democracy, if it has a federal system in which more than 20 states "resemble apartheid South Africa more than a functioning multiracial democracy."

What is truly frightening is that the six GOP appointees on the U.S. Supreme Court, embrace the party's anti-democratic drift or appear determined to provide judicial support even if it means sacrificing the fundamental principles of constitutional jurisprudence.

And finally, moderate Democrats and anti-Trump Republicans either do not appreciate the direness of the situation or do not care. Democratic Senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema and Republican Senator Mitt Romney, for reasons of

their own, do not seem to care whether the American democracy dies in darkness or in fading light.

Susan B. Glasser, the former editor-in-chief of Foreign Policy magazine wrote pessimistically in the New Yorker magazine on May 27, 2021 an article aptly titled, 'American Democracy Isn't Dead Yet, but It's Getting There.'

Daniel Ziblatt and Steven Levitsky, both Harvard University political scientists published their 'How Democracies Die' in January 2018. One of their chief arguments was that democracies often come under threat not from invading armies or violent revolutions but at the ballot box: death by a thousand cuts. 'People use elections to get into power and then, once in power, assault democratic institutions.'

*"Things actually are much worse than we expected"*, Daniel Ziblatt, told Glasser in May 2021. He said he had never envisioned a scenario like the assault on the Capitol Hill. It was beyond imagination that an American President would unleash an insurrection to steal an election that he clearly lost - and then still continued to command the support of his party.

In contemporary Germany, he said, an incitement to violence of the kind deployed by Trump and his backers might get a political party banned. But, in America's two-party system, you cannot ban one of the two parties, even if it marches into anti-democratic extremism.

Suzanne Mettler, Professor of American Institutions at Cornell University and Robert C. Lieberman, Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University co-authored 'Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy' that was published in 2020.

They begin at the beginning, noting that the early republic was by no means a democracy. The democratic ideals of equality and government by consent, did not exist in governing practices and in fact clearly repudiated them, most blatantly by sanctioning slavery. The Constitution established a government, with public officials chosen directly or indirectly by an electorate of white men. One in five Americans of African descent was enslaved, lacking civil and political rights. The Constitution not only condoned this practice but even granted additional political power to slaveholders and to the states in which they resided. Not until the 1970's could the U S be called an inclusive democracy.

According to Mettler and Lieberman the four historical threats to the US democracy have been: political polarization, lack of political belonging, economic inequality and excessive executive power. Their research reveals that democracy

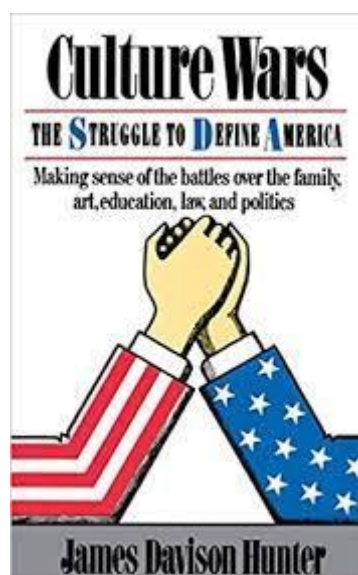
flourishes when these conditions are absent; when one or more conditions exist, democracy is weakened.

Today, for the first time in its history, they feel, the U S faces all four threats at the same time. It is this unprecedented confluence - more than the rise to power of any particular leader - that lies behind the contemporary crisis of American democracy. The threats have grown deeply entrenched, and they will likely persist and wreak havoc for some time to come.

In 1991, when America was gripped by an ideological struggle between a liberal secular society that pushed for change and a conservative opposition that viewed the world through the prism of divine scripture, James Davison Hunter wrote a book 'Culture Wars' which tackled the issues of the time: abortion rights, school prayer, gay rights etc.



Credit: news.virginia.edu



Credit: amazon.com

Hunter was interviewed by Zack Stanton for Politico magazine on May 5, 2021, in which he made several interesting observations:

1. The culture wars have expanded from issues of religion and family culture to take over politics almost totally, creating a dangerous sense of winner-take-all conflict over the future of the country.
2. Democracy is an agreement that we will talk through our differences, not kill each other. What's troubling is that we are beginning to see signs of the justification for violence.
3. Culture wars precede shooting wars, they don't necessarily lead to shooting wars, but you never have a shooting war without a culture war prior to it, because culture provides the justification for violence.
4. The earlier culture war (of 1990's) really was about secularization, and the positions were tied to theologies and justified on the basis of theologies, that is no longer the case. You rarely see people on the right rooting their positions within a biblical theology or ecclesiastical tradition, it is a position that is mainly rooted in fear of extinction.
5. On political matters, one can compromise; on matters of ultimate moral truth, one cannot.
6. We have politicized everything and politics has become a proxy for cultural positions that simply won't brook any kind of dissent or argument.
7. The extraordinary advances in social media leading to the multiplication of anonymity, the extremism of rhetoric, the absence of any kind of accountability in public speech make it even more difficult to find any kind of depth in arguments.
8. Compromise becomes difficult, if not impossible, in such a situation of the democratization and proliferation of free speech.
9. Conflicts leads to media attention, and media attention leads to political power.

As a result of the Culture Wars, many Americans are increasingly concerned that their national heritage, the democratic republic, is in serious danger.

A recent poll from the University of Virginia's Center for Politics confirms that there is plenty to worry about.

The U of V's Center for Politics poll surveyed 2,000 voters on several issues related to democratic health.

The most frightening findings show that supermajorities of voters in each camp believe the other side is bent on destroying the country. More than 80 percent of Biden and Trump voters agree that elected officials of the other party 'present a clear and present danger to American democracy.' More than 70 percent of both sets of voters believe that some extreme media voices on the other side should be censored 'despite the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment.' More than 75 percent of Biden and Trump voters believe that Americans who strongly support the opposite party also threaten the American way of life.

It should be no surprise, then, that voters on both sides of the partisan divide are embracing views that are inconsistent with democracy.

More than 60 percent of Biden voters and roughly 80 percent of Trump voters believe things like 'true citizens' should 'help eliminate the evil that poisons our country from within' and America 'needs a powerful leader to destroy the radical and immoral currents prevailing in society today.' Nearly identical shares of both sets of partisans - about 45 percent - say America would be better off if the president could take 'needed actions without being constrained by the Congress or the courts.'

Substantial numbers of Americans in each camp are even willing to break up the country. Forty-one percent of Biden voters and 52 percent of Trump voters say the 'situation in America is such' that they would favor Blue-or-Red states 'seceding from the union to form their own country.'

Democrats and Republicans now harbor hatred for members of the opposing party in nearly equal measures, and both are evidently comfortable espousing anti-democratic practices.

This corroborates data from the Pew Research Institute, which also found that partisan animosity has risen and is widely shared by each party's supporters.

An important byproduct of the Culture Wars is anti-history.

Anti-history is spurious history. It is a false or fictional narrative describing past events which did not actually occur.

For Trump's Republican Party, anti-history has become a shibboleth. They drop historical references and facts into political debates, without regard to context, logic, or proportionality. The Trumpists are willfully ignorant of history, which

they view in purely instrumental terms, as a bludgeon to wield without bothering to understand it.

As usual, Donald Trump himself has led the way. In 2018, according to the then White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, Trump told him, *“Well, Hitler did a lot of good things.”*

Trump’s former spokesperson Kayleigh McEnany blithely told Fox News viewers, *“We know most of our forefathers, all of our main Founding Fathers, were against slavery, recognized the evils of it.”*

The purpose of anti-history is to whitewash historical truths or facts and propagate alternate history.

If anti-history is here, can anti-Science be far behind?

Anti-Science has emerged as a dominant and highly lethal force. Anti-Science is the rejection of mainstream scientific views and methods and their replacement with unproven or deliberately misleading theories, for political gains. It typically targets prominent scientists to discredit them.

Beginning 2020, the Trump White House launched a coordinated disinformation campaign that dismissed the severity of the epidemic in the United States, attributed COVID deaths to other causes, claimed hospital admissions were due to a catch-up in elective surgeries, and asserted that ultimately the epidemic would spontaneously evaporate. It enthusiastically promoted at different time-intervals hydroxychloroquine, convalescent plasma, oleandrin, Regeneron, dexamethasone, famotidine, remdesivir, not to mention injecting disinfectant into the patient’s body and irradiating it with UV light!

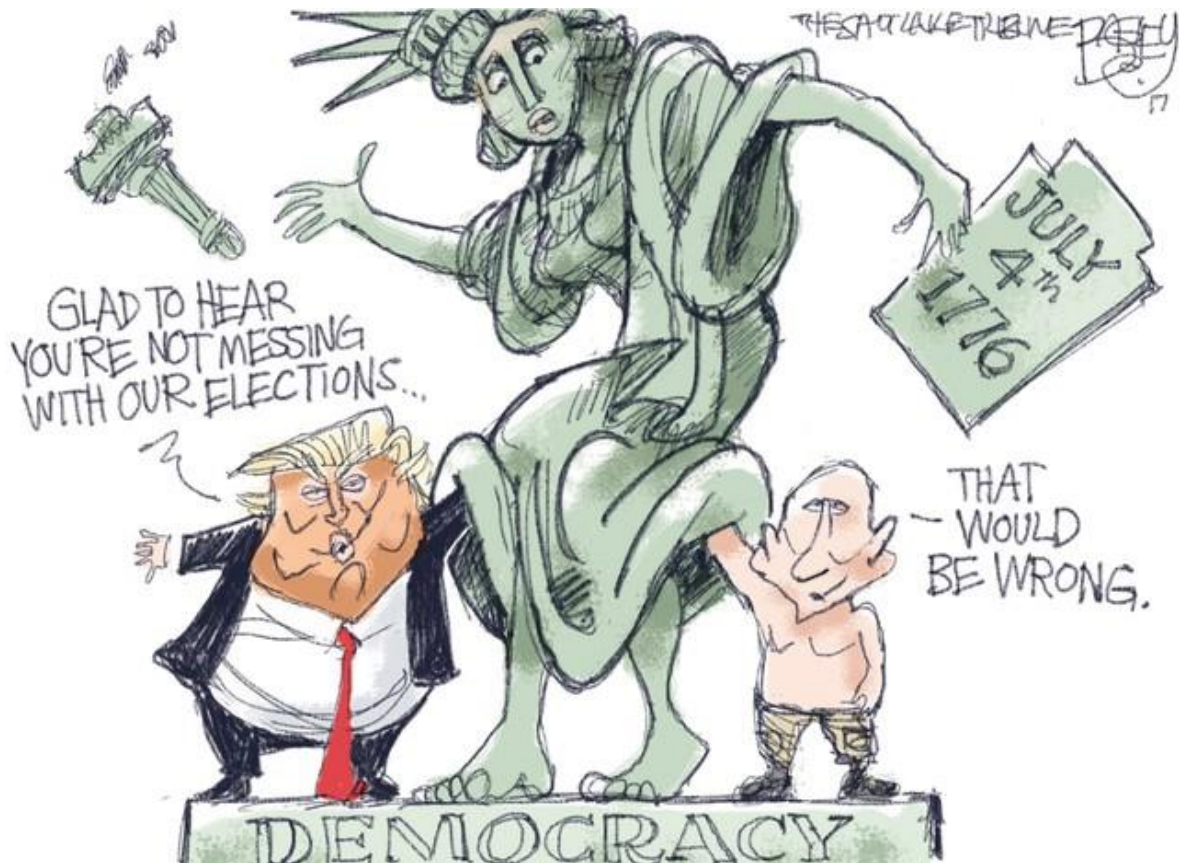
More than 600,000 Americans have died, 500,000 + on Donald Trump’s watch.

There has been no more fascinating political leader in contemporary history than Donald Trump. He has been a darling of serious historians, stand-up comedians, late night show hosts, lampoonists and cartoonists.

According to NPD (National Purchase Diary) BookScan, in the last four years, there have been more than 1,200 unique titles about Trump. WorldCat (the world's largest network of library content and services) records that the count for the leading personalities is: Jesus Christ 10,873, George Washington 8,019, Napoleon 7992 and Abraham Lincoln 6152.

*“He’s a madman, but with millions of followers, including powerful elected members of the United States government”*, says Tara Setmayer, a former Republican strategist now a senior adviser with the anti-Trump Lincoln Project.

In July 2021, the Guardian reported that the leaked Kremlin documents describe Donald Trump as an 'impulsive, mentally unstable and unbalanced individual'. Vladimir Putin, therefore decided to assist Trump's rise to power in 2016 as a way to weaken America.



Credit: globegazette.com

Taken together, the Trump books show just how close the US came to disaster amid stark warnings from military leaders and unprecedented fears of an attempted coup.

Trump retains control of a party committed to advancing his lie that his defeat was the result of electoral fraud and to attacking the voting rights of opponents. It is therefore important, Setmayer said, for the media to continue to cover both Trump and the avalanche of books about him.

Journalism, so the cliché goes, is the first draft of history. Books based on journalism should therefore, be seen as the second.

Historian Sidney Blumenthal, a Clinton aide turned Lincoln biographer, warned that the history, the books are trying to write is not yet over.

*“It would be complacent to regard this as something comfortably in the past,” he said. “The insurrection Trump organized and coordinated and paid for, revealed weaknesses in the system that the entire Republican party now is devoted to filling in, through not only voter suppression but ‘election’ suppression.”*

All this demonstrates how dangerous Trump remains and why books about him sell.



It is appropriate at this stage to see how the Republican Party is manipulating the Electoral College system.

*“The Electoral College is a disaster for our democracy”, said Donald Trump on November 6, 2012. Four years later, on November 15, 2016 his view had changed dramatically: “The Electoral College is actually genius in that it brings all states, including the smaller ones, into play.”*

Every four years, Americans get a little lesson in constitutional law when they are reminded that presidents are not actually elected by the people, but by the Electoral College. They realize that when they vote in a presidential election, they are not really voting for the President, but for slates of electors put forward by both parties who are expected to vote for the winner of their state’s Presidential race.

According to the U.S. National Archives (which coordinates the Electoral College's actions), between Election Day and December 8, states must resolve any disputes about who has won their election so that the proper electors can be named. Electors then meet to cast their votes in their respective states on December 14. The votes of the electors are placed in sealed envelopes and sent to Washington, where they must be received no later than December 23. On January 6, after the new Congress convenes, it meets in joint session to literally count the electoral votes and to formally determine who the next president will be. If even one senator and one representative object to the results, each house has to meet separately to discuss the objections and resolve them.

As everyone knows, the winner is whoever gets 270 electoral votes - one more than half the total number of electoral votes. Each state gets electoral votes equal to the number of House representatives and senators from that state, plus three for the District of Columbia, making a total number of 538 electoral votes, with 269 being exactly half. (Ties are theoretically possible, in which case the election would be thrown into the House of Representatives, where each state would have one vote, per the Twelfth Amendment.)

The president must get an absolute majority of electoral votes. It's not enough to get the most electoral votes in the event that more than two candidates split the vote. If no candidate gets 270, then the House of Representatives will decide the winner. (This effectively destroys the viability of third parties in presidential elections: they can never get a majority of electoral votes and can only act as spoilers).

Another important wrinkle in the way the Electoral College works is that many electors are not legally bound to vote for the candidate who won their state or the one to whom they are nominally pledged.

This is a unique system. No other country in the world has anything like it.

It exists because the Founding Fathers were deeply distrustful of democracy. At the Constitutional Convention on July 17, 1787, George Mason of Virginia said, "it would be as unnatural to refer the choice of a proper character for chief magistrate to the people, as it would, to refer a trial of colors to a blind man."

But at the same time, they distrusted allowing the legislature to name the nation's chief executive, as is done in parliamentary democracies. This led to the creation of the Electoral College as an intermediate institution.

The Founding Fathers were also of the view that the average voter had insufficient knowledge and lacked judgment to choose the president. At the Constitutional

Convention on July 19, 1787, Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts said, *“The people are uninformed, and would be misled by a few designing men.”*

Alexander Hamilton, writing in Federalist No. 68, said it was desirable that *“the immediate election should be made by men most capable of analyzing the qualities adapted to the station, and acting under circumstances favorable to deliberation, and to a judicious combination of all the reasons and inducements which were proper to govern their choice. A small number of persons, selected by their fellow-citizens from the general mass, will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to such complicated investigations.”*

A truer, but camouflaged reason for the founding of the Electoral College and the firm rejection of a system that would elect presidents by popular vote had to do with slavery. Southerners were concerned that they would be handicapped by the large number of slaves in their states. As Hugh Williamson of North Carolina declared at the Constitutional Convention on July 17, 1787, *“Slaves will have no suffrage.”*

Northern states with the same population as their Southern slave counterparts would have exercised greater electoral influence, thanks to the disenfranchisement of slaves. By making election of the president a function of electoral votes rather than population alone, the Electoral College leveled the playing field between free states and states with slavery. Southern electoral votes were limited by counting slaves as three-fifths of a man for purposes of apportionment.

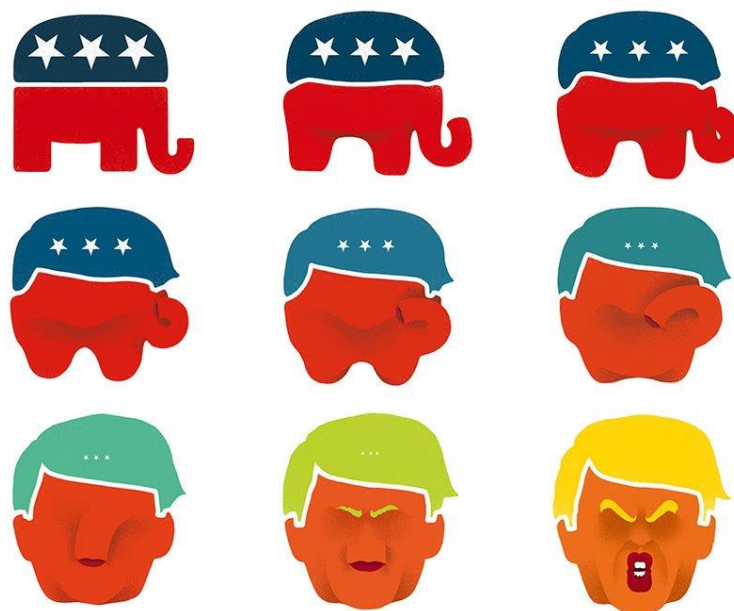
As early as the election of 1800, the cleverness of the Southern strategy paid off with the election of Thomas Jefferson of Virginia. His margin of victory over John Adams of Massachusetts came from electoral votes that derived from the inclusion of the slave population in the Electoral College tally. Had slaves not counted at all, as was the case with Native Americans, Jefferson would have lost.

The political scientist William D. Blake points out that although the former slaves were given the right to vote by the Fifteenth Amendment, Southern states largely disenfranchised them and their descendants for the next 100 years. But they now counted the same as whites for the purposes of apportionment since the three-fifths clause (a slave would be counted as three-fifths of a free individual) was now moot. Here was another ironic outcome for future elections: The Civil War increased the electoral power of the Southern racists. Nineteenth-century Republicans reacted by creating new states in the West with small populations to counteract Southern strength in the Electoral College. These small states now form the core of Republican power in presidential elections.

There is an inherent bias in the Electoral College toward low-population states because every state gets two senators, and no state may have less than one representative. Thus Wyoming, Montana, and the Dakotas have 12 electoral votes

among them, even though their combined population is smaller than that of Los Angeles.

The problems of the Electoral College have been debated throughout American history. Presidents Andrew Jackson and Richard Nixon called for its abolition, and Congress has weighed many different proposed reforms over the years. Despite a majority of Americans (61 percent, according to a Gallup poll) favoring the Electoral College's abolition, the prospects for the Congress enacting a constitutional amendment that would do this are very slim, for two reasons - Republicans strongly support the status quo, and small states benefit from it. Even if an amendment were to be passed by the Congress, ratification by three-fourths of the states is an impossible hurdle.



Luca D'Urbino

Credit: economist.com

The only realistic option for overcoming the Electoral College is the National Popular Vote initiative. It works on the basis that states can determine for themselves how their electors are chosen. States supporting popular election of the president can pledge their electors to vote for the winner of the national popular vote, rather than just the popular vote in that state. Fifteen states with a combined 196 electoral votes have passed legislation agreeing to this arrangement, but it won't go into effect until there are at least 270 electoral votes among the states supporting the plan.

Had this system been in effect, electors in states won by Trump would automatically have been allocated to Biden, since he easily won the national popular vote by some five million votes. There would be no need for recounts or court challenges in individual states unless the national popular vote was extraordinarily close. The world would have known the winner on the election night itself!

Opponents of the National Popular Vote plan denounce it with the same argument traditionally made by defenders of the Electoral College: that populous states would have undue influence and small states would be powerless.

Not surprisingly, the Republican Platform denounced the National Popular Vote arrangement as ‘a grave threat to our federal system and a guarantee of corruption, as every ballot box in every state would offer a chance to steal the presidency.’

Demography is playing a big role in what is happening in America.

In 2015, the US Census Bureau published a report projecting that by 2044, the United States’ white majority would become merely a white plurality: immigration and fertility trends would lead to the ethnic and racial minorities out-numbering the white population.

Since then, for a certain section of Americans, each annual release by the Bureau has become a sort of countdown to the White Apocalypse. Given the racial nature of American political parties, it has huge electoral implications.

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, an influx of Irish people arrived on the East Coast that outnumbered immigrants from all other countries. After their arrival, the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment enfranchised millions of African American men in late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the next century, the US admitted millions of Italians, Jews and others, with the realization that the Anglo-Protestant white population was unlikely to remain a dominant majority.

Soon, the native ‘whiteness’ got re-interpreted to include the Irish, Italians, Jews and Slavs. The definition of white people became broad enough to maintain hold over African-Americans, Asian people and Hispanics.

Stoking fears of white decline deliberately ignores the facts and fantasizes that the Irish had not been demonized, that the Italians had never been discriminated, that the Jews had never been humiliated.

Because of the status of the ‘white’ people in the American society, the sense of belonging, or proximity is still a highly coveted commodity.

Hence the assault on voting rights.

Republican-controlled state legislatures have rammed through bills that make it harder to vote in states such as Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Iowa and Montana.

Their efforts in Texas were temporarily derailed when Democrats walked out of the chamber, denying them a quorum.

Daniel Ziblatt, a political scientist at Harvard University, has commented: *“The most worrying threat is at the state level, the effort to change voting rules, which I think is prompted by the failed effort to alter the election outcome of 2020. The lesson Republicans have learnt from that is they don’t really suffer any electoral consequences from their base pursuing this kind of thing. In fact, they’re rewarded for it. That’s very ominous because that suggests they’ll continue to try to do this until they pay an electoral price for it and so far, they don’t sense they’re paying an electoral price for it.”*

For many, the nightmare scenario is that Trump will run again in 2024 and, with the benefit of voter suppression, sneak a win in the electoral college as he did in 2016. If that fails, plan B would be for a Republican-controlled House to refuse to certify a Democratic winner and overturn the result in Trump’s favor.

Republicans are playing a long game, rewiring the hard drive of democracy in an attempt to consolidate power. Trump is both cause and effect, symptom and disease of this rightward lurch, in the context of the white Christians losing majority status in the changing demographics.

Kurt Bardella, a former Republican congressional aide who is now a Democrat, says ominously, *“It’s very clear that the next time there is a violent effort to overthrow our government, Republicans in Congress will be the knowing accomplices in that effort. They are the getaway driver for the arsonists.”*

The current Trumpian ‘ideology’ of the Republican party is anti-democratic and the ambition is to impose a minority rule on the majority, because they know that if and when the playing field is levelled, they can’t win. The party leadership has decided to supporting an autocrat and they will do doing everything possible to destroy the constitutional safeguards.

Jay Rosen of New York University talks about a nightmarish scenario in which the State legislatures, the House and the Senate simply hand over the presidency to the G.O.P. nominee (read Trump), because there is, at present, nothing in the statute books that can stop it.

Ross Douthat, The New York Times columnist wrote about the three ways in which Donald Trump could be prevented from plunging America into crisis in 2024:

1. Through some dramatic electoral overhauls favored by progressives;

2. By preventing the G.O.P. from capturing the House or the Senate; and
3. Through the actions of conscientious Republican officials who refuse to go along with Trump in turning another loss into an attempted *putsch*.

The response to Douthat's column was pessimistic: none of the three approaches to forestalling a crisis seemed plausible. He conceded, *'In sum, we can all see the disaster that is coming, but there is no clear way to stop it.'*

Yvette Simpson, chief executive of Democracy for Action compared Biden's victory over Trump in 2020 to the film 'Avengers: Endgame' and warned against complacency. *'We just defeated Thanos and everybody was like, 'OK, let's take a break,' and I'm like, 'No, we cannot take a break because the GOP never take a break.'*



Credit: seesharppress.wordpress.com

All of the above is scary enough, and what if 2020 was just a rehearsal?

Richard Hasen, Professor of Law and Political Science at the University of California is a nationally recognized expert in election law and campaign finance regulation. He used to be concerned about election nightmare scenarios: the electrical grid being hacked on Election Day, or the pandemic warping turnout, or

absentee ballots totally overwhelming the postal service. But now, what keeps him awake at night aren't the fanciful 'what if' exercises: It's what has actually happened and how it could truly blow up the next presidential election.

*"You could look at 2020 as the nadir of American democratic processes, or you could look at it as a dress rehearsal,"* says Hasen.

*"What would have happened if the election was exactly the same, except Kevin McCarthy was Speaker of the House?"* Hasen asks. *"I don't know that we'd have a President Biden right now."*

Hasen is worried about voter suppression, but he is equally concerned about voter subversion. For example, Georgia recently passed a new voting law that makes it a crime to give water to people waiting in a long line to vote. That's voter suppression, that will deter some people who are stuck in a long line from voting.

Election subversion, on the other hand, is about manipulating the outcome of the election so that the loser is declared the winner and put in power.

People are willing to cheat if they think they've been cheated out of their fair win. Trump supporters believe he really won, and are therefore ready to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that he is not cheated the next time, even if they have to use violence to do that.

Hasen makes a very effective point: *The law is only as powerful as people's willingness to abide by it.* If you put people in power who don't follow the law, then the law is not legitimate.

Robert Kagan, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in a much-celebrated opinion piece published in the Washington Post on 23 September 2021 warned that the US constitutional crisis was already clear and present.

He elaborated, *"The United States is heading into its greatest political and constitutional crisis since the Civil War, with a reasonable chance over the next three to four years of incidents of mass violence, a breakdown of federal authority and the division of the country into warring red and blue enclaves"*.

He highlighted the following warning signs:

1. Donald Trump will be the Republican candidate for president in 2024.
2. Trump and his Republican allies are actively preparing to ensure his victory by whatever means necessary.

3. The stage is being set for chaos. Imagine weeks of competing mass protests across multiple states as lawmakers from both parties claim victory and charge the other with unconstitutional efforts to take power.
4. Partisans on both sides are likely to be better armed and more willing to inflict harm than in 2020.
5. Would governors call out the National Guard? Would President Biden nationalize the Guard and place it under his control, invoke the Insurrection Act, and send troops into Pennsylvania or Texas or Wisconsin to quell violent protests?
6. Deploying federal power in the states would be decried as tyranny. Biden would find himself where other presidents have been - where Andrew Jackson was, during the nullification crisis, or where Abraham Lincoln was, after the South seceded - navigating without rules or precedents, making his own judgments about what constitutional powers he does and doesn't have.

Most Americans have refused to take this possibility seriously enough to try to prevent it. The political and intellectual establishments in both parties have been underestimating Trump since he emerged on the scene in 2015. They underestimated the extent of his popularity and the ability to take control of the Republican Party; and most importantly, they underestimated how far he was willing to go to retain power.

The fact that he failed to overturn the 2020 election has reassured many that the American system remains secure, though it easily could have gone the other way. Trump came close to bringing off a coup earlier this year. All that prevented it, was a handful of state officials with noble courage and integrity, and the reluctance of two attorneys general and a vice president to obey orders they deemed wrong.

These were not the checks and balances the Framers had in mind when they designed the Constitution and Trump has exposed the inadequacy of those protections.

The checks and balances the Framers put in place depended on the separation of the three branches of the government, which they believed, would zealously guard their own powers and prerogatives. Trump succeeded in ensuring that loyalty to him superseded loyalty to the branch.

Because the Trump movement is less about policies than about Trump himself, it has undermined the normal role of American political parties, which is to absorb new political and ideological movements into the mainstream.

Kagan is forthright in stating, *“It would be foolish to imagine that the violence of January 6 was an aberration that will not be repeated. Because Trump supporters see those events as a patriotic defense of the nation, there is every reason to expect more such episodes”*.

Looking ahead to 2022 and 2024, Trump insists *“there is no way they win elections without cheating. There’s no way.”* So, if the results come in showing Democratic victory, Trump’s supporters will know what to do.

Kagan concludes, *“We are already in a constitutional crisis. The destruction of democracy might not come until November 2024, but critical steps in that direction are happening now. In a little more than a year, it may become impossible to pass legislation to protect the electoral process in 2024”*.

What is most distressing to many observers is the diminished moral authority of the US Supreme Court.

Robert Reich who served as law clerk to Judge Frank M. Coffin, Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals and as assistant to the U.S. Solicitor General, Robert Bork, before serving in the administrations of Presidents Ford, Carter, Clinton and Obama in various capacities, wrote a scathing opinion piece in the Guardian on September 2, 2021 titled, ‘The US supreme court is now cruel, partisan – and it is squandering its moral authority’.

He made the point that by not blocking the most restrictive Texas law that allows private individuals to sue to enforce a ban on abortion after about six weeks of pregnancy and thus imposing a huge financial burden on women to travel to another state where abortions remain legal, the Court’s Republican-appointed justices (six of nine), were ready to overturn the court’s 1973 decision in *Roe v Wade*, striking down anti-abortion laws across the nation, violating a woman’s right to privacy under the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution.

He talked of the Supreme Court of the earlier period where he argued as a young lawyer, where the idea that the fundamental role of the supreme court was to balance the scales in favor of those who were powerless, was actively practiced, for the reason that the other two branches of government could not be relied on to do that.

Reich feels that a majority of the Supreme Court judges are knee-jerk conservatives who were appointed by presidents who had lost the popular vote and three of them by a president (Trump) who instigated a coup against the United States.

He quoted Alexander Hamilton who believed that the authority of the Supreme Court derived entirely from the people’s confidence and trust in it as, citing the passage in the Federalist Papers 78, “the judiciary has neither the sword (the

executive branch's power to compel action) nor the purse" (the Congress's power to sanction funds).

Melvin I. Urofsky, reviewing Erwin Chemerinsky's book, 'PRESUMED GUILTY, How the Supreme Court Empowered the Police and Subverted Civil Rights' in the N Y Times on 24th August 2021, made several stinging observations against the Supreme Court.



Credit: cartoonmovement.com

The Earl Warren court is admirably singled out for caring about the rights of the accused. Many of its decisions (especially the 'Miranda') caused an uproar among conservatives and Richard Nixon promised that if elected he would appoint justices who favored law and order and the police rather than the criminals. Nixon got to name four men to the court – Warren Burger, William Rehnquist, Harry Blackmun and Lewis Powell, who began hollowing them out. With the appointments of Reagan, the Bushes and Trump, that process has continued unabated.

Chemerinsky in his book PRESUMED GUILTY, presents a damning indictment of the Supreme Court. In case after case, the nation's highest tribunal found that

police actions, *even when clearly in violation of constitutional prohibitions, were acceptable.* The decisions have not only prevented citizens from getting injunctions against future use of such practices as chokeholds, they have also made it almost impossible for those who have been the victims of police brutality to win civil suits seeking compensation. In a damning indictment, Chemerinsky declares, the court's record *"from 1986 through the present and likely for years to come, can easily be summarized: 'The police almost always win.'"*

Dana Milbank writing in the Washington Post on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021 gloomily concludes that what's happening in Texas is a foretaste of what is likely to happen in a post-democracy America: an America where women cannot get abortions, even in cases of rape and incest; an America where almost everybody can openly carry a gun in public, without license, without permit, without safety training and without fingerprinting and an America where law-abiding Black and Latino citizens are disproportionately denied the right to vote.

Especially diabolical and anti-democratic is the Republican voting bill that bans drive-through and 24-hour voting, both used disproportionately by voters of color; imposes new limits on voting by mail, blocks election officials from distributing mail-ballot applications unless specifically requested; gives partisan poll watchers more leeway to influence vote counting and places new rules and paperwork requirements that deter people from helping others to vote or to register.

At least 17 more states have adopted similar restrictions.

Dana Milbank says, *Texas became a "majority minority" state more than 15 years ago - and the country as a whole will follow in about two decades.*

White voters dominate the electorate; Latinos are about 40 percent of the Texas population, but only 20 to 25 percent of the voters. The new voting law, by suppressing non-White votes, aims to keep White voters dominant. It is clear that as demographics turn more and more against Republicans, their anti-democratic actions will get worse.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michelle Goldberg writing in the N Y Times, on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021 described in detail 'How Republicans Could Steal the 2024 Election'.

Quoting Erica Newland, counsel for Protect Democracy, a nonprofit organization, she says that if the Republican Party controls both Houses of Congress on Jan. 6, 2025, there's no way a Democrat even if legitimately elected, will get certified as the president-elect.

She paints a dark picture: Republicans have a good chance of winning the House in 2022. Redistricting alone will probably give them several new seats. They could win the Senate as well.

Republicans in states like Arizona have proposed laws that would allow state legislatures to override the popular vote and choose their own electors. Georgia’s new voting law, for example, gives the legislature the power to choose the head of the State Election Board — a position formerly held by the secretary of state. The board, in turn, will be invested with the power to investigate and replace local election officials.

Our current system, Newland says, *“provides lots of opportunities for bad actors to claim there are ambiguities and to exploit those claims of ambiguities. They have to believe in the process in order for the process to actually work. Otherwise, they can purposely gum up the works so thoroughly that it’s impossible to declare a winner”*.

If that happens, the election would be tossed to the House, with each state delegation getting one vote. Even now, with the House as a whole controlled by Democrats, there are more states whose representatives are predominantly Republican. With enough procedural mischief, politicians representing a minority of the country could hand the presidency to a candidate who got a minority of both the popular and Electoral College votes. If this has never been an evident danger in the past, it’s because both parties and their supporters were at least outwardly committed to liberal democracy.

That is no longer true. The Republican electorate, believing that Democratic victories are by their nature illegitimate, demands that everything possible be done to subvert them. Republicans have made it clear that while American democracy was given a reprieve in 2020, they are unlikely to be forgiving in 2024.

The Gallup poll has found that the public trust in all three branches of the US government is on the decline:

Branch	1997-2021 Avg.	2020	2021
Judiciary	68	67	54
Executive	52	43	44
Legislative	47	33	37

In an article in the Washington Post of 27 September 2021 Robert Barnes and Seung Min Kim, wrote that the Supreme Court’s approval rating is plummeting, its

critics are more caustic, and justices are feeling compelled to plead the case to the public that they are judicial philosophers, not politicians in robes.

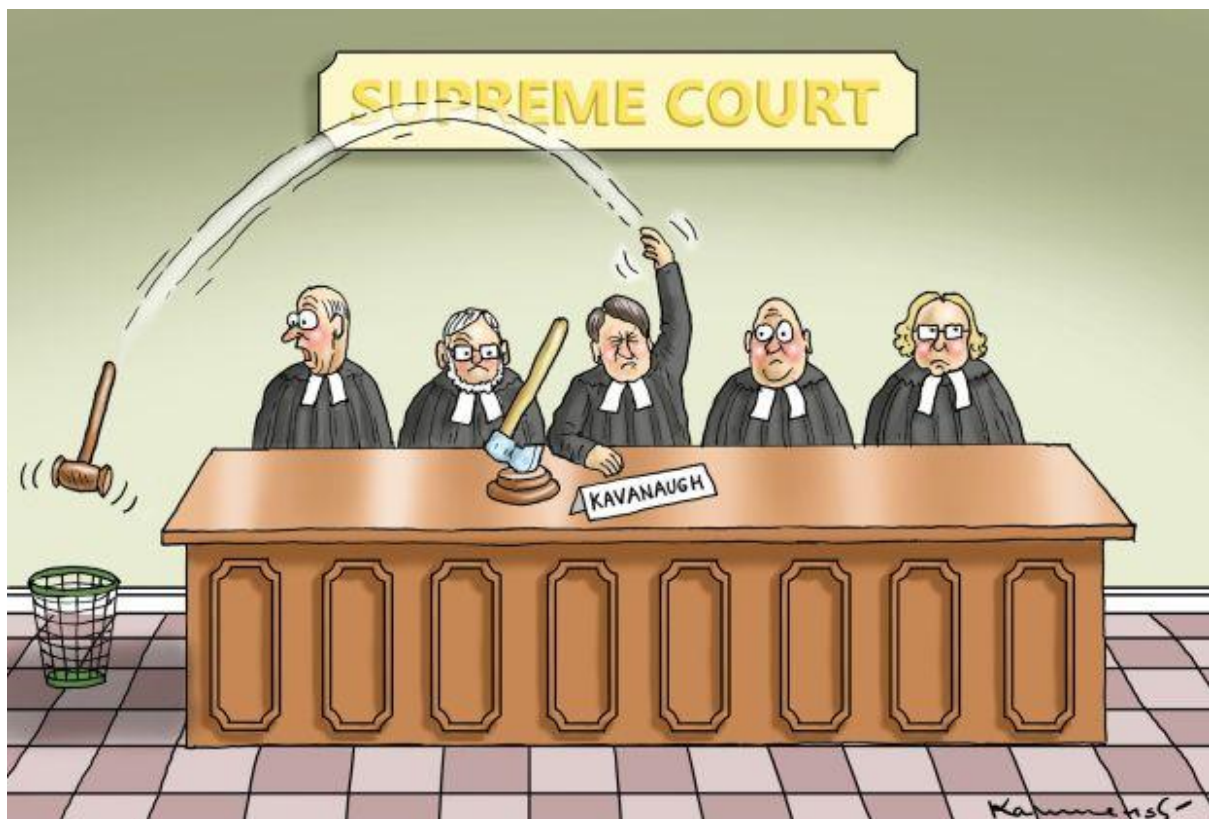
*“Not since Bush v. Gore has the public perception of the court’s legitimacy seemed so seriously threatened,”* says the Georgetown Supreme Court Institute’s executive director, Irv Gornstein.

In recent weeks, three justices Amy Coney Barrett, Clarence Thomas, and Stephen G. Breyer, have defended the court’s decision-making and independence.

*“This court is not comprised of a bunch of partisan hacks,”* Barrett said in a speech in Kentucky, asserting that judicial philosophies, not partisan leanings, dictate the court’s rulings.

Thomas, in a speech at the University of Notre Dame, said justices do not rule based on *“personal preferences”*.

Breyer has pointed out controversial areas in which liberal and conservative justices have reached agreement, highlighting staying out of election challenges brought by former president Donald Trump and his allies.

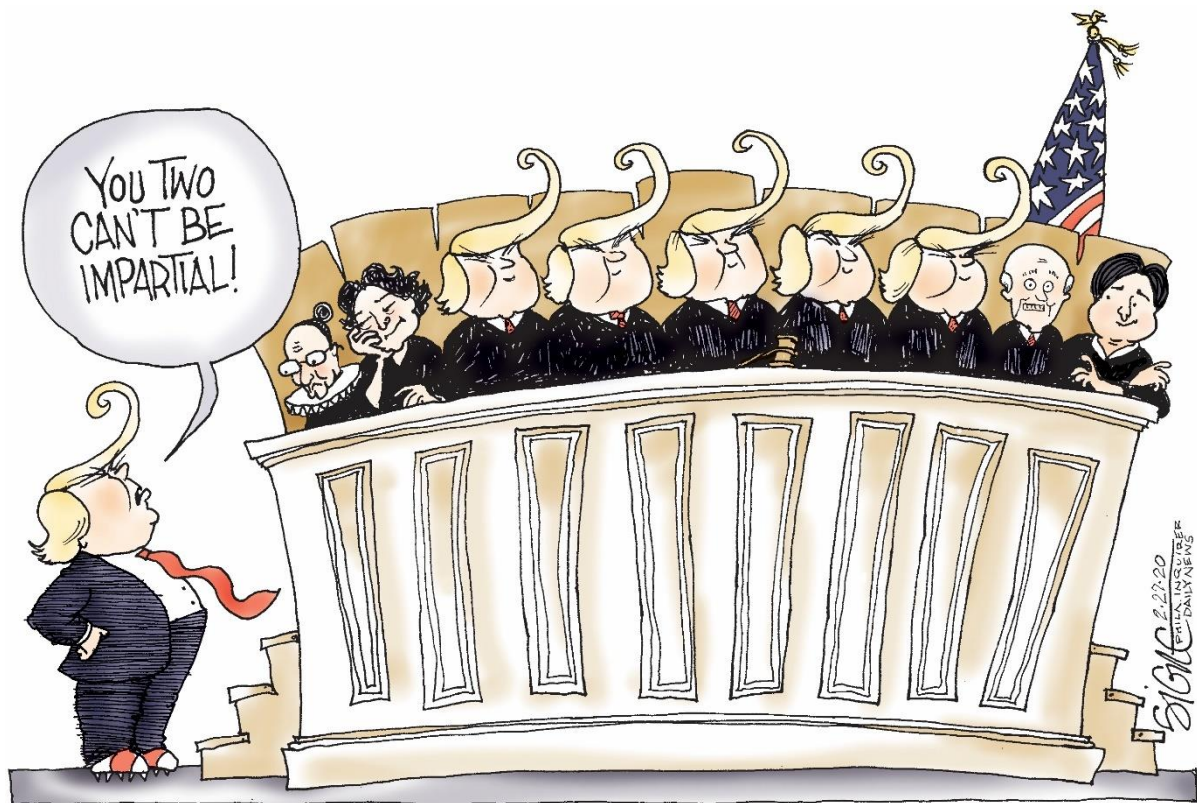


Credit: mercurynews.com

Democrats remain chafed at Trump's ability, with support from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to transform the Supreme Court.

McConnell refused to allow a hearing on President Barack Obama's Supreme Court choice Merrick Garland in 2016, saying it was inappropriate in an election year. He then rushed through Barrett's confirmation to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg just before the Election Day, after voters had begun casting early ballots that denied Trump a second term!

Along with replacing Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, Trump nominated and Republican-majority Senate confirmed Barrett and Gorsuch and Kavanaugh, giving the court a 6-to-3 conservative majority that is likely to remain for years to come.



Credit: inquirer.com

Trump said that he needed Barrett so that a full court could hear litigation arising from the election, and he proclaimed that the people he nominated to the high court would overturn *Roe vs. Wade* (The 1973 landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in which it ruled that the U S Constitution protects a pregnant woman's right to have an abortion without excessive government restriction).

Senator Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) said he agrees with the perception that the court *"is increasingly a political institution."*

Pulitzer prize-winning columnist Maureen Dowd pulled no punches in her scathing opinion piece in the NY Times on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2021. *"Supreme Court justices have become whirling dervishes of late, spinning madly to rebut the idea that Americans are beginning to regard the court as a dangerous cabal of partisan hacks"* adding, *"many of us have thought that for a long time"*.

She dates the politicization of the Court to the year 2000, when the Court threw the game on Bush v. Gore, voting 5 to 4 to stop the Florida recount and anoint George Bush.



Credit: theweek.com

She is certain that the right-wing Court is going to deliver rulings that will drive people crazy. She says it's a disaster that the country is going one way and the court is going the other.

She concludes ominously, *"the Least Dangerous Branch, as the court was once known, has become the Most Dangerous Branch."*

"What is truth", the jesting Pilate asked Jesus (John 18:38). That Biblical query has gained in curiosity since the rise of 'Trump': 'Narrative' has taken the place of 'Truth' in political discourse. Biden administration is engaged in a battle of competing narratives and this fight is being fought on all fronts, every single day.

The challenges before Biden administration are well documented. The four years of the chaotic reign of Trump have left America weak and vulnerable on many fronts.

The World Daily Global News, in its 20th January 2021 program listed the following five major challenges facing America: Coronavirus, Climate, Immigration, National security and US-China relations.

Coronavirus has already claimed more than 750,000 American lives, a number greater than the combined casualties in the two World Wars as well as the Civil War toll of 655,000!

Like everything else in the US, the pandemic has become very political. During the early months of Covid-19 vaccinations, several demographic groups lagged in getting vaccinated, including Black Americans, Latinos and Republican voters.

Recently, the racial gaps have narrowed, but the partisan gap, has become huge. A Pew Research Center poll in August 2021 found that 86 percent of Democratic voters had received at least one shot, compared with 60 percent of Republican voters. And because the vaccines are effective at preventing serious illness, Covid deaths are showing a partisan pattern. Covid is a national crisis, but the worst forms are increasingly concentrated in 'red' (Republican) America.

Republican party supporters' resistance to vaccination stems from their libertarian instincts. *"They understand freedom as being left alone to make their own choices, and they resent being told what to do,"* William Arthur Galston, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution wrote in The Wall Street Journal.

The Republican Party under Trump's leadership, has grown hostile to science and empirical evidence in recent decades. The conservative media complex, especially, the Fox News, Sinclair Broadcast Group and some online outlets, amplify this hostility. As a result, falsehoods and doubts about vaccinations from the fringes of American life have got elevated to the mainstream of political conversation.

Financial incentives, rewards, workplace punishments have been exhausted. The salvation for America, perhaps lies in herd immunity.

Biden returned the US to the Climate Change agreement upon taking the presidency which Trump, contemptuous of both the Science and the scientists, had abandoned.

The White House issued a 40-page report on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021 in a follow-up to the May executive order that called for an analysis of how the US economy could be affected by extreme heat, flooding, storms, wildfires and the consequent adjustments needed to address the climate change.

The October 15 report stated: *“The scientific evidence on climate change has grown increasingly stark. Continued warming will further destabilize our climate and produce more frequent and intense storms, wildfires and heatwaves as well as more damaging droughts and more extensive ecosystem losses.”*

An earlier report of 13 US federal agencies, authored by more than 300 experts issued in November 2018 had stated that the Climate change constituted a major threat to Americans’ health and the country’s economic well-being. It estimated that the Climate change had cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$350 billion over the past decade, and that the costs could only go higher as effective action plans were lacking. Costs included, clean up and disaster assistance from fires, flooding, storms etc. which are set to increase with rising temperatures.

But here again, the challenge that Biden faces is ideological. America is waking up to climate change, but the Republican party is in no mood to provide comfort to the Democrats. Republican Senator James Inhofe, who once tossed a snowball on the Senate floor to dispute global warming continues to insist that climate change is a ‘hoax’.

Donald Trump, as usual, has spoken from all sides of his mouth calling climate change ‘mythical’, ‘nonexistent’ and an ‘expensive hoax’, simultaneously insisting, it is a serious subject that is very important to him.

Democrats have pushed a range of solutions, including expanding wind and solar energy, bolstering energy storage and the electric grid, investing in electric vehicles and making buildings more energy efficient. Many of these are folded into Biden’s legislative agenda, currently working its way through the Congress. But Democrats have slim majorities in both houses, forcing Biden to scale back his proposals to get bi-partisan support for them.

Recent surveys show that Americans are increasingly concerned about global warming effects, that have been visible to all. Early and wide-ranging fires, incessant rains resulting in severe floods, storms, tornadoes, hurricanes, the people have seen it all this year. No wonder then, around two thirds of the people interviewed recently told Pew that addressing climate change should be a priority. Yet climate change rivals traditional US cultural flashpoints such as gun control and abortion for causing divisiveness, according to ‘Climate Change in the American Mind’, a survey by Yale and George Mason University researchers. Unsurprisingly, a Gallup poll this year found 82 per cent of Democrats believed that global warming had already begun compared with just 29 per cent of Republicans!

Still, this could be a propitious moment. Biden has a workable, though razor-thin, congressional majority. Republicans are slowly becoming receptive to discussions

and this year's cascading weather-driven disasters open a small window of policy opportunity.

Immigration is one of the biggest challenges facing the Biden administration and the performance thus far has been under-whelming.

There is a growing gulf between the progressive immigration values that Biden espoused on the campaign trail and the tough policies he's enforcing.

On the campaign trail, Biden promised a more humane approach to the southern border than former President Donald Trump, whom he described as launching an *"unrelenting assault on our values and our history as a nation of immigrants"* and *"bullying legitimate asylum seekers."*

His administration has clung to pandemic-related border restrictions enacted by Trump, known as the Title 42 policy, under which the US has expelled hundreds of thousands of migrants without giving them access to their legal right to apply for asylum. And faced with a spike in Haitian migrants at the border, Biden returned thousands to Haiti despite an ongoing humanitarian crisis there.

Biden has become a target of criticism from both the right and the left. Republican hawks accuse him of presiding over an out-of-control border, while Democrats decry his decision to deny Haitians and other migrants a safe haven.

Wealthy countries have long struggled with calibrating migration policy to treat vulnerable populations humanely while defending national borders. As the living conditions worsen in the poor nations because of poverty, internal conflicts, religious and racial prejudice etc. the number of refugees willing to take enormous risks has increased exponentially. At the same time, faced with political, economic and security challenges, the destination-countries have been less welcoming and in many cases are willing to employ ruthless policies to stem the flows of desperados.

As Fareed Zakaria pointed out in his opinion piece in the Washington Post, of 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021 Biden's generous approach to immigration, has contributed to the huge surge of migrants. Nearly 180,000 people arrived at the southern border or tried to cross illegally in the first two months of 2021, more than double the number of the first two months of 2020. Officials at the border are overwhelmed.

One poignant feature of this unprecedented influx has been the large number of unaccompanied children. The asylum system and immigration control are clearly out of depth.

The concept of asylum has undergone a great change after World War II, when the United States created a separate path for those migrants who feared religious, ethnic or political persecution.

The vast majority of people entering the US from the southern border are mainly economic migrants, fleeing poverty and violence and throw up the question: how many such migrants can the US absorb (and Europe, as well) given the economic uncertainties and the social and political challenges to the polity they represent.

Trump already smells blood. Having been elected in 2016 in some large measure because of fears about illegal immigration, he is already attacking Biden on that issue. The issue dominated his speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference in August this year, in which he accused Biden of triggering *“a massive flood of illegal immigration into our country the like of which we have never seen before.”*

Biden has shown his heart is in the right place, but he has yet to show that he has a plan to absorb the migrants who are already in the country before opening the gates to refugees from the world!

In their report of 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2020 on The U.S. Immigration Debate, Claire Felter, Danielle Renwick, and Amelia Cheatham of Council of Foreign Relations highlighted the following:

Immigrants comprised almost 14 percent of the U.S. population, or more than 44 million people out of a total of about 327 million, according to the Census Bureau. Together, immigrants and their U.S. born children made up about 28 percent of U.S. inhabitants. The figure represents a huge jump from 1970, when there were fewer than ten million immigrants in the United States. The undocumented population is estimated to be about eleven million and it was believed to have leveled off since the 2008 economic crisis, which led some to return to their home countries and discouraged others from coming to the United States.

A 2019 Gallup poll found that 76 percent of Americans considered immigration a good thing for the United States. As many as 81 percent supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants if they met certain requirements.

So, three hundred days into office, how has Biden performed as US President?

Bret Stephens, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist writing in the NY Times on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021, fears that another failed presidency is at hand.

The American civilization, he says, paraphrasing Will Durant, was born optimistic and enlightened, now it feels as if it's fading into paranoid senility. Biden, he says, sold himself as a transitional president, a fatherly figure who would restore dignity and prudence to the Oval Office after the mendacity and chaos that came before him. Instead, he has become headstrong but shaky, ambitious but inept.

He cites the bungled withdrawal from Afghanistan to support his assessment. *Whatever the theoretical merits of the decision to withdraw our remaining troops from*

*Afghanistan*’, he writes, *‘the military and intelligence assumptions on which it was built were deeply flawed, the manner in which it was executed was a national humiliation and a moral betrayal, and the timing was catastrophic’.*

He is unsure whether Biden’s \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation bill, touted as ‘the most significant expansion of the nation’s safety net since the war on poverty in the 1960’s will turn out well, given his party’s slim to non-existent majorities in the Congress. He is afraid, the bill may go the way of Hillary Clinton’s health care reform of 1994, which resulted in a sharp swing to the center.

A loss in the 2022 mid-term elections may make his supporters wonder if he has the stamina to fight his way back in 2024.

The way back from this cliff’s edge, according to Stephens is: Biden acknowledging the gravity of his administration’s blunders and by fixing accountability for them, starting with the State Department. He could follow this up with the compromise \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill without holding it hostage to the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill.

Stephens is realistic enough to accept that Biden will do neither. Simply because he is proud, inflexible, and thinks ‘he’s much smarter than he really is.’

David Ignatius, the highly awarded writer feels that Biden might become another ‘incredible shrinking’ president. Writing in the Washington Post on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021, he sees Biden a captive of his own party (not to mention the Halloween goblins of the Republican party).

Biden got elected as a centrist. But he has been pulled left since Inauguration Day by the progressives who argue that the center is dead and the time for compromise is past.

When things are looking so gloomy for Biden and the democrats, can the January 6 Commission turn out to be a source of some joy?

The U.S. House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol is a select committee of the United States House of Representatives formed through a party-line vote, on July 1, 2021, to investigate the attack. The membership of the Committee has been a point of significant political contention, with House Republicans boycotting the Committee. The investigation commenced with public hearings on July 27, when four police officers testified.

According to a poll by Politico magazine, a majority of Americans support the January 6 investigation, with 58% supporting overall and 29% opposing; 52% of Republicans polled, opposed it.

Several National Commissions have been appointed in recent past to investigate acts of extreme political violence in the US. The Warren Commission investigated the Kennedy assassination. The Kerner Commission looked at the causes of urban uprisings in the 1960s. The 1983 Beirut bombings and the 9/11 Terrorist attacks also prompted the creation of commissions.

The fact of the matter is that out of the 800-odd protesters, a single determined shooter could have turned the attack on the Capitol into a massacre. Hostages could have been taken. Bombs could have been hurled or planted. Fires could have been set. No branch of the federal government has been so seriously threatened since 9/11.

The Commissions of Investigation assume a certain nobility since they try to provide an accurate historical record of events. The 9/11 Commission report is still the most authoritative source on the attacks. A 1/6 Commission could provide an authentic and detailed chronology that looks at the political setting before November's presidential election and the contentious atmosphere that followed, leading up to January 6.

The most curious fact about the assault on the US Capitol is that it was executed by Americans, who consider themselves to be patriots. If they were mere vandals, devoid of ideological belief, it would be a security and law enforcement problem. What is not clear is if this was merely a disorganized crowd or whether at least a section was following a preconceived plan.

Was the intent a disruption, a demonstration of contempt, or a warning?

It has been argued that the assault meets the official definition of terrorism. FBI defines domestic terrorism as *“violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature”*.

Some have used the term ‘insurrection’, to describe the attackers; some members of the group have been charged as conspirators. A most colorful description, of course, is an ‘attempted coup.’

No commission can be tasked to heal the deep divisions in American society and politics. But it could address a fundamental question: How do the people maintain the reality and appearance of open government that guarantees public access to their elected officials while protecting them - physically and psychologically - from intimidation and terror?

British cinema personalities Dan Reed and Jamie Roberts have produced a documentary film ‘Four Hours at the Capitol’ about the Capitol Hill riot after

studying a very large part of the 15,000 hours of video footage. *“It is horrific, it is shocking to witness to what point America is divided”* says, Reed.



Credit: cbsnews.com

Often the footage speaks for itself, such as when the Cowboys for Trump founder Couy Griffin describes *“thousands of peaceful patriots standing around”* while the viewer is shown a bloody, baying mob and Griffin stirring them up further. *“It was very violent: this was an out-and-out physical attack on the Capitol and the people defending it,”* says Reed.

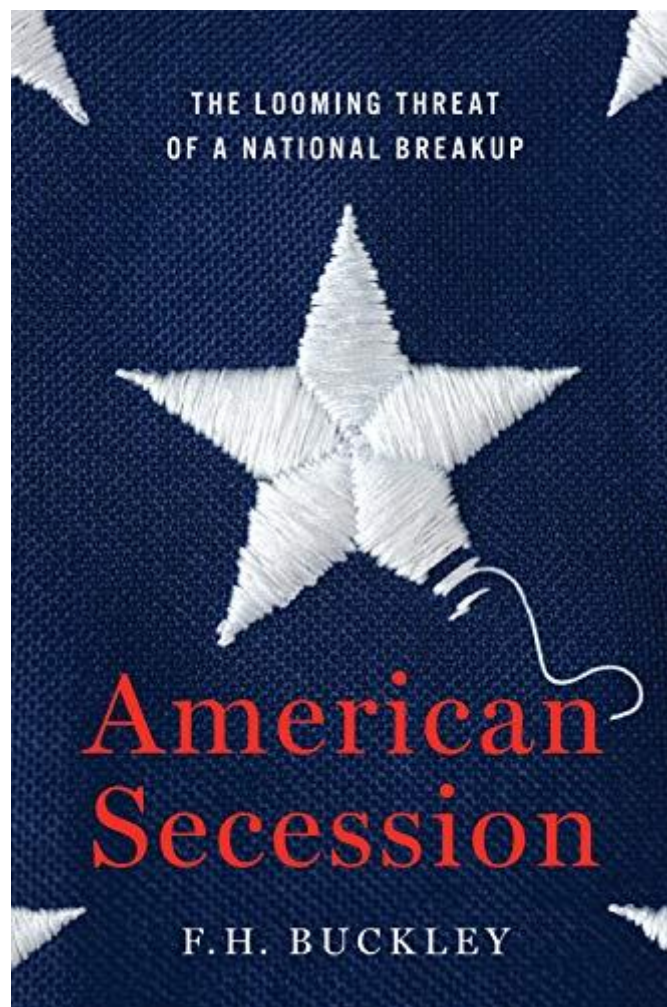
Had the House of Commons been in comparable jeopardy, Reed says, *“there would have been massive bloodshed – with that level of threat, I think the police would have definitely opened fire. It’s just astonishing that the Capitol police didn’t.”*

In the aftermath of the attack on the US Capitol, membership of the right-wing militia groups reportedly surged.

The fact that America is truly divided is well-established and yet, it is shocking to know that many of Americans actually want to break up the country.

Rick Lowry, writing in the Politico magazine of 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 quotes from a recent survey by the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia which found that about 50 percent of Donald Trump voters and 40 percent of Joe Biden voters agreed (to some extent) with the proposition that the country should split up, with either red or blue states seceding.

Last year, there were dueling secession books. From the right, George Mason University's F.H. Buckley published *American Secession*, arguing that *'the United States is ripe for secession'* and that *'there's much to be said for an American breakup'*.

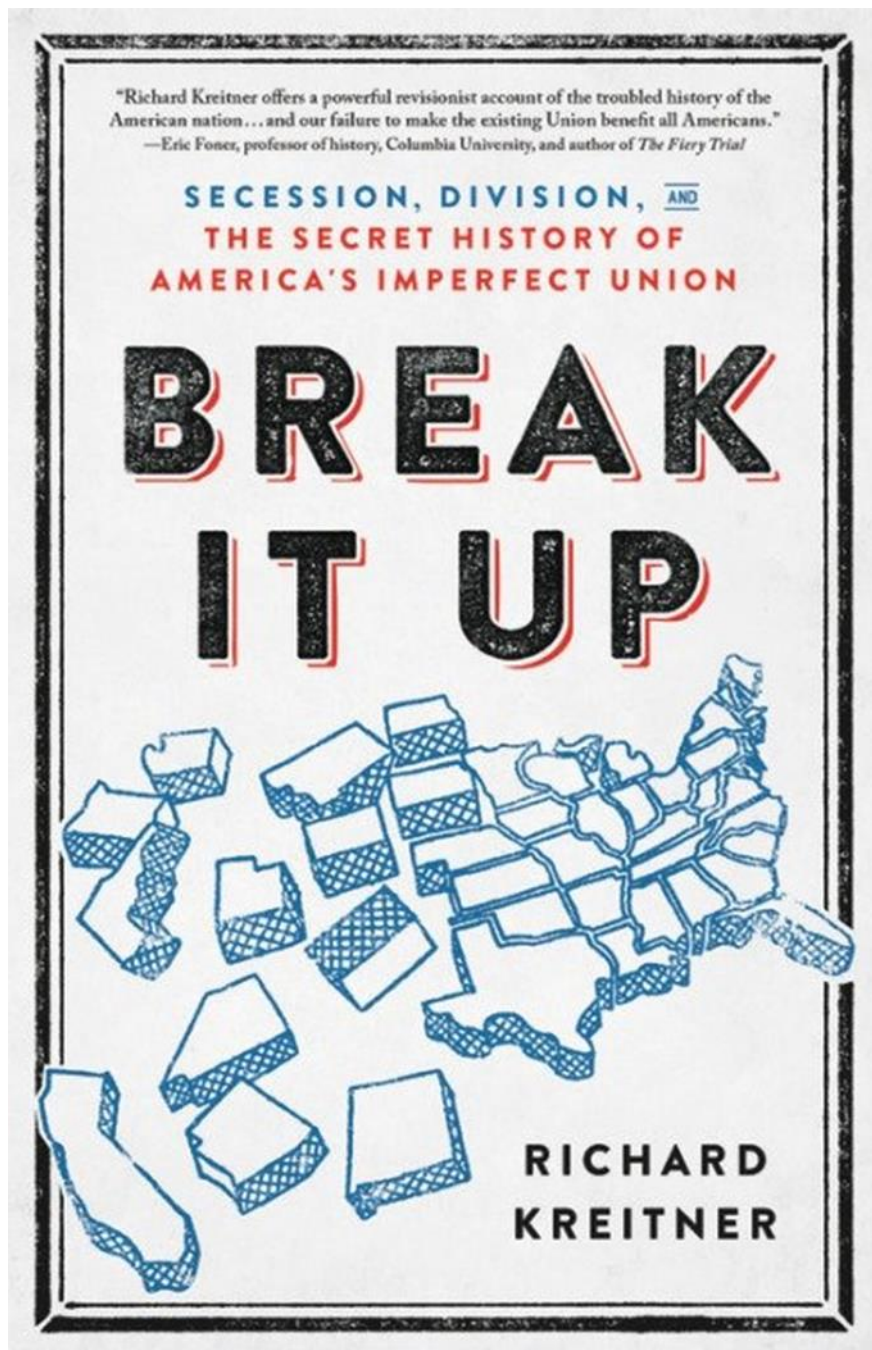


Credit: amazon.in

From the left, The Nation's Richard Kreitner wrote, *Break It Up*, contending that *"we must finally finish the work of Reconstruction or give up on the Union entirely."*

Sub-stacker (provider of on-line platform) David Reaboi has written a post titled, “*National Divorce Is Expensive, But It’s Worth Every Penny.*”

Texas state Rep. Kyle Biedermann has been agitating for the so-called Texit, and Allen West, the former chair of the Texas GOP and now a candidate for governor, has openly talked of secession.



Credit: amazon.in

There is no doubt the country is deeply riven along political, cultural and religious lines, although it is debatable if the current poisonous contention is worse than that of the 1790s, since political and cultural conflict is endemic, large and loud in diverse democracies.

Lowry feels that a National Divorce has nothing to commend. The practical obstacles are obvious and often insuperable and the likely effects would be very harsh to its proponents. National Divorce would be akin to prescribing a strong dose of arsenic as a cure, it would burn down America to save America!

The deleterious effects of a breakup would be enormous. A disaggregated United States would be instantly less powerful. Indeed, Russia and China would love to watch the equivalent of the crackup of the Soviet Union or the Qing dynasty (the final imperial dynasty in China (1644 to 1912)).

The economic consequences would be severe. The U S is a continent size free trade zone, exchanging that for Balkanized markets would be catastrophic.

The control of the federal government, the most powerful organization on earth, would be crucial. It has 1.3 million people under arms and a stockpile of 3,800 nuclear warheads. These, and federal lands and other assets, would be subject of many contentious and protracted negotiations.

Mercifully, secession isn't mainstream yet. But the fact that otherwise sensible people are even contemplating it, is scary.

This is an impulse that must be resisted.

Breaking up is hard to do and quitting on America is unforgivable.



Credit: science.org

\*

## Israel's Quest for Safe, Peaceful Homeland



Credit: offset.com

*“L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim habnuyah”*

“Next year in the Rebuilt Jerusalem”

## Israel's Quest for Safe, Peaceful Homeland

No people in history have suffered so much, for so long, as the Jewish people.

The three Religions of the Book trace their origins to Abraham: Jews and Christians from his second son Isaac, and Muslims from his first son Ishmael.

According to the Tanakh (Old Testament), the Lord made a covenant with Abraham and said, "To your descendants, I give this land from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates."



Set of scrolls comprising the entire Tanakh

Credit: Wikimedia commons

The Talmud (the primary source of Jewish religious law and theology) affirms the religious status of the Holy Land, the obligation of Jews to live there and promises the ultimate re-union of all Jewish people.

This belief has been reiterated throughout their history: the Temple in Jerusalem destroyed twice, will be rebuilt a third time. The Passover Seder (ritual feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover) concludes with *L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim*, ('Next year in Jerusalem'). In Israel, one more word is added: *L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim habnuyah* ('Next year in the rebuilt Jerusalem').



Babylonian Talmud

Credit: newworldencyclopedia.org

Abraham was the original exile after an attempt on his life by King Nimrod. Moses led his people from slavery in Egypt to Mount Sinai; the Exodus is the subject of many works of art.

Following the Roman conquest of Judea and the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, hundreds of thousands of Jews were taken as slaves to Rome, from where they migrated to other European lands.

According to James Carroll, the American (Roman Catholic) author, *"Jews accounted for 10% of the total population of the Roman Empire. By that ratio, if other factors had not intervened, there would be 200 million Jews in the world today, instead of 15 million."*

There were many expulsions of Jews during the Middle Ages: 16,000 Jews were expelled from England in 1290, 100,000 from France in 1396; tens of thousands were expelled from Austria in 1421. Around 200,000 Sephardic Jews were expelled by the Spanish crown and Catholic church in 1492, many thousands from Sicily in 1493 and Portugal in 1496.

Antisemitism has been described as the "the longest hatred". Jerome Chanes of City University of New York has identified three stages in the historical development of antisemitism:

- Ancient antisemitism, which was primarily ethnic;
- Christian antisemitism, which was religious; and
- The racial antisemitism of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.

In 19 CE the Roman emperor Tiberius started organized expulsions of Jews from Rome. He sent conscripted young Jewish men, to provinces known for their unhealthy climate. He expelled other Jews from the city, upon threat of life-long slavery.

The Romans refused to allow Jews to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem after its destruction by Titus in 70 CE and imposed a tax (Fiscus Judaicus).

Although most of the New Testament was written by Jewish followers of Jesus, there are a number of passages in the New Testament that are antisemitic and have been used to harass Jews:

Jesus spoke thus, to a group of Pharisees: *"I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you ... You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him."* (John 8:37–39).

When Christianity became the religion of Rome in the 4th century, Jews became the object of religious ridicule and oppression. Romans became extremely hostile towards Jews and attacked and burnt synagogues. Edicts of Theodosianus barred Jews from the civil service, the army and the legal profession.

*Deicide* is the killing of a god. In Christianity, *Deicide* refers to the crucifixion of Jesus. The accusation of *Deicide* has been the most powerful instigation for antisemitism. The earliest recorded instance of an accusation of *Deicide* against the Jewish people as a whole, occurs in a sermon of 167 CE attributed to Bishop

Melito of Sardis. This text blamed the Jews for allowing King Herod and Caiaphas to crucify Jesus. According to this view the Jews present at Jesus' crucifixion and their descendants collectively and for all time, committed the sin of Deicide.

Persecution of Jews in Europe reached its peak during the Crusades. In 1096, the German Crusade destroyed flourishing Jewish communities on the Rhine and the Danube. In the Second Crusade of 1147, the Jews in France were victims of atrocities and killings. When King Richard left to join the Third Crusade in 1190, anti-Jewish riots broke out in England. In 1290, English Jews were sentenced to be banished. In 1298, 100,000 Jews were killed by Rintfleisch knights. In 1396, 100,000 Jews were expelled from France and in 1421, many thousands were expelled from Austria.

When the Black Death plague swept across Europe in the 14th century, killing more than half the population, Jews became convenient scapegoats. Rumors circulated that they had caused the epidemic by deliberately poisoning wells (an accusation that had appeared earlier in the leper scare of 1321). Hundreds of Jewish communities perished in the ensuing violence.

During the first crusade, the Jewish defenders of Jerusalem retreated to their synagogue to "prepare for death" once the Crusaders had breached the outer walls of the city during the siege of 1099. The chronicle of Ibn al-Qalanisi states that 'the building was set on fire whilst the Jews were still inside. The Crusaders were reported to have hoisted their shields singing "*Christ We Adore Thee*," while encircling the burning building'.

Pogroms against Jews in Cordova in 1011 and in Granada in 1066 are recorded. The Almohads, on taking control of the Maghribi and Andalusian territories in 1147, treated the '*dhimmis*' (non-Muslims paying the *jizya* tax) with contempt. Faced with the choice of death or conversion, many Jews fled. Decrees ordering forced conversions and destruction of synagogues were issued in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Morocco.

The word Zion is used 152 times in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) as a synonym for Jerusalem as well as for the Land of Israel. It originally referred to Mount Zion located to the south of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Its location now is just outside the Old City wall forming the southern boundary of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City.

Zion came to designate the area of Davidic Jerusalem where the fortress stood, and the name was used for the entire city of Jerusalem. Later, when Solomon's Temple was built on the Temple Mount, the term was further expanded to include the Temple, the hill upon which the Temple stood, the entire city of Jerusalem, the

entire biblical Land of Israel, and finally, *"the World to Come"*, the Jewish world in the afterlife.

Devout Jews recite the Amidah (the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy) three times a day facing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, praying for the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, the restoration of the Temple service, the redemption of the world and for the coming of the Messiah. The last line of the Israeli national anthem Hatikvah (Hebrew for "The Hope") is *"Eretz Zion, ViYerushalayim"*, meaning "The land of Zion and Jerusalem".

Within the Jewish population there are distinct ethnic divisions, primarily as a result of geographic spread of the original Israelite population. The Jewish settlements in various parts of the Old World, were separated by great distances resulting in long-term isolation. The individual communities therefore, developed in varying political, social and cultural environments.

Jews are often identified as belonging to one or the other two major groups: Ashkenazim, or "Germanics" (Ashkenaz means "Germany" in Hebrew), or Sephardim, or "Hispanics" (Sefarad means "Iberia" in Hebrew).

Smaller groups include, Indian Jews such as the Bene Israel, Bene Menashe, Cochín Jews, and Bene Ephraim; various African Jews, including the Beta Israel of Ethiopia; and interestingly, the Chinese Jews, especially, the Kaifeng Jews.

Ashkenazi Jews represent the bulk of the modern Jewish population in the United States, Canada, Argentina, Australia, and Brazil. In France, the Jews from Algeria (Sephardim) outnumber the Ashkenazim.

The term "Zionism", was coined by the Austrian writer Nathan Birnbaum in his journal *Selbstemanzipation* ("self-emancipation") in 1890.

The goal of Zionism was defined as bringing together Jews in Palestine. It had its first political expression in 1896 in the pamphlet "The Jewish State" written by journalist Theodor Herzl, the Austro-Hungarian Jewish political activist considered the father of Zionism. Herzl formed the Zionist Organization and promoted Jewish migration to Palestine to form the Jewish state. Although he did not live to see its formation, the grateful nation acknowledged his contribution and the Israeli Declaration of Independence honors him as "the Spiritual Father of the Jewish State".

The first Zionism congress held on 29-31 August 1897 in Basel, Switzerland stated, "Zionism aims at establishing for the Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine." I founded the Jewish State today," said a happy Theodor Herzl. "If I said this out loud, I would be greeted by laughter, in five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty years, everyone will perceive it."



The United Nations General Assembly on 29 November 1947 adopted The Partition Plan. The Plan provided for the termination of the Mandate, the progressive withdrawal of British armed forces and the delineation of boundaries between the two States and Jerusalem. The Plan was accepted by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, despite reservations about territorial limits set on the proposed Jewish State. Arab leaders and governments rejected it totally.

The Plan envisaged the following demographics:

Territory	Arab Pop.	%	Jewish Pop.	%	Total Pop.
Arab State	725000	99	10000	1	735000
Jewish State	407000	45	498000	55	905000
Inter-national	105000	51	100000	49	205000
Total	1237000	67	608000	33	1845000

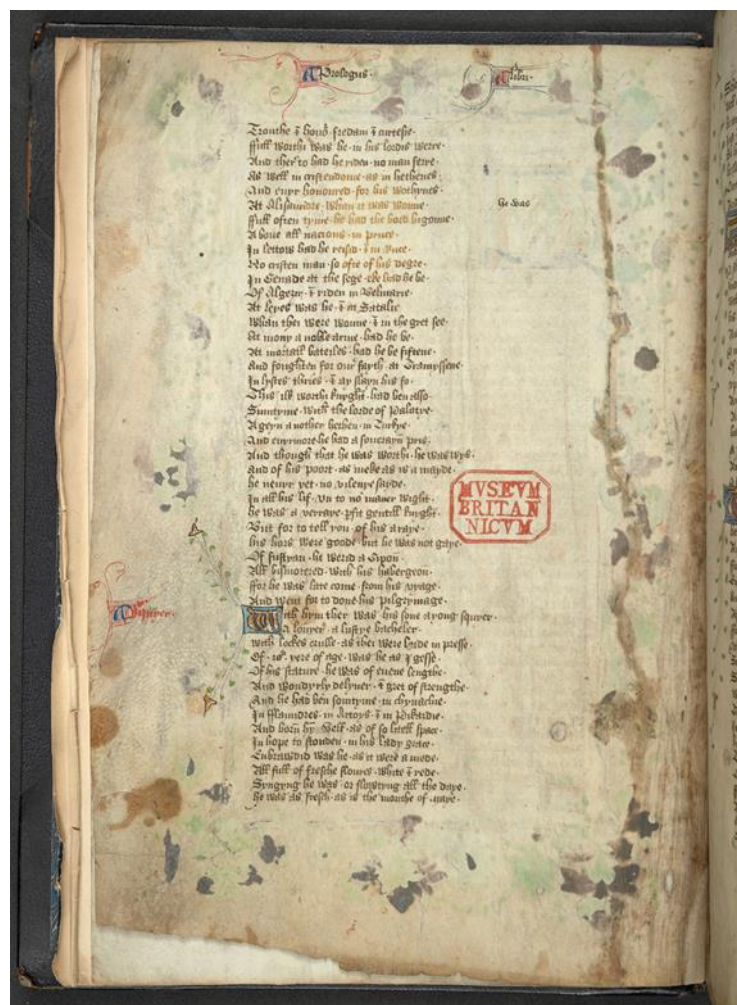
On May 15, 1948, the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq entered Palestine. They took control of the Arab areas, attacking Israeli forces and invading Jewish settlements. The war ended on January 7, 1949. The result was expansion of Israeli territory from the 14,000 square kilometers agreed by the United Nations to 21,000 square kilometers!

\*

Anti-Semitism, the "the longest hatred" was widely prevalent in the European societies even in the so-called Age of Enlightenment, and several literary and artistic works.

Chaucer, for instance, in *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400) has a story of a devout Christian child who was murdered by the Jews annoyed by his singing a hymn!

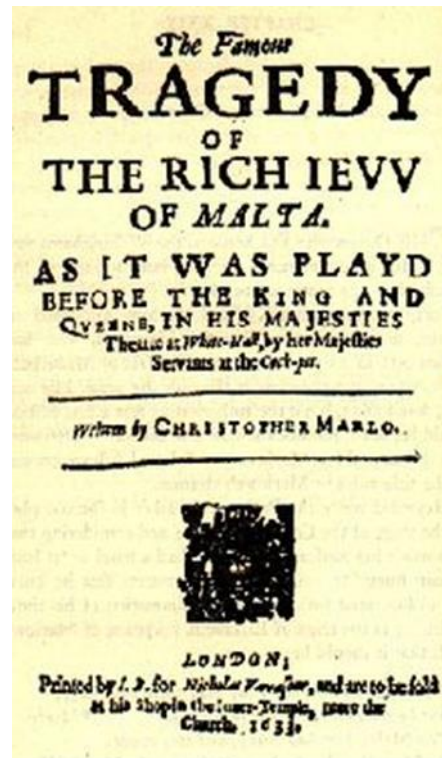
The character of Barabbas in Christopher Marlowe's play *The Jew of Malta* (1589 or 1590) is the first portrayal of a psychopath in English literature. Barabbas is the biblical name of a notorious Jewish thief and murderer who was pardoned and released from Roman custody in Jerusalem. In his place, Jesus was crucified. According to the Gospel, both Barabbas and the crowd of Jews that saved him, caused the crucifixion of Jesus. For this Deicide, Jews have historically been blamed. By naming his psychopathic character Barabbas, Marlowe used the popular grudge against the Jews.



Credit: British Library, UK

Shakespeare's character Shylock in *Merchant of Venice* (1596-1599), was greatly influenced by Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, yet another Jewish moneylender stereotype.

The antisemitic venom was also on full display in Macbeth, in the form of the three witches, who while stirring their cauldron for “a charm of powerful trouble”, chant their incantations and enumerate their potion’s ingredients, which include “Liver of the blaspheming Jew”.

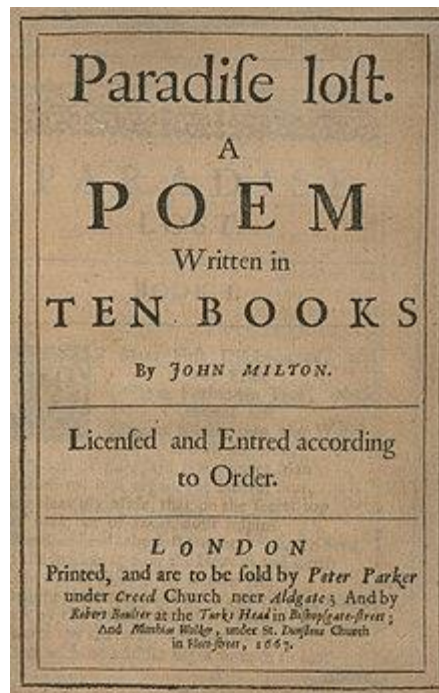


Credit: Wikipedia



Credit: imdb.com

John Milton in Book XII of *Paradise Lost* (1667), describes Jesus as being “to death condemnd, shameful and accurst, naild to the cross by his own (Jewish) nation”. This harkens back to the Church’s anti-Semitic assertion that Jews (rather than the Romans) killed Jesus.



Credit: Wikipedia

In France, Voltaire's work presented the antisemitic stereotypes to the aristocracy. In his 1759 novel *Candide* (1759), Voltaire satirizes Jews as being “greedy and dishonest”.

The "villain Jew" is Fagin in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838), “immoral, miserly, and disgusting to look at”.

Across the pond, American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne in *The Marble Faun* (1860), reviled Jews as "the ugliest, most evil-minded people" who resembled "maggots when they overpopulate a decaying cheese."

CANDIDE,  
OU  
L'OPTIMISME,  
TRADUIT DE L'ALLEMAND  
DE  
MR. LE DOCTEUR RALPH.

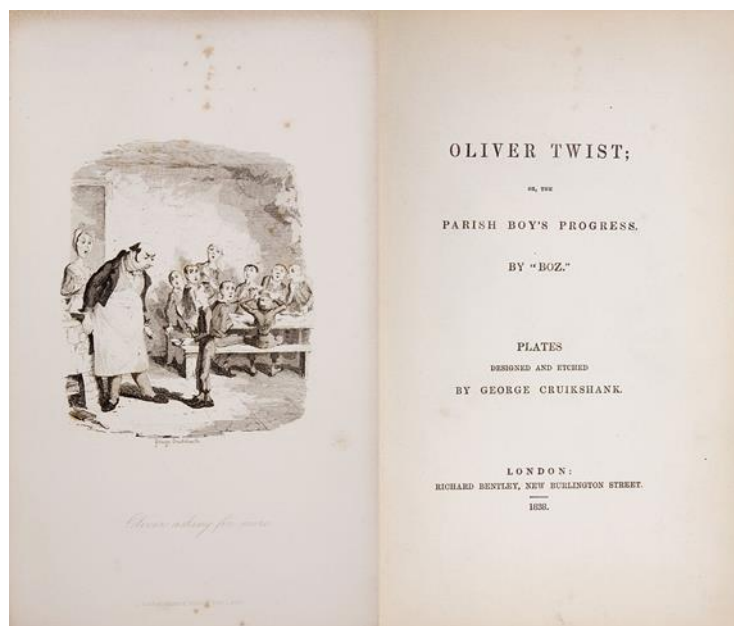



---

---

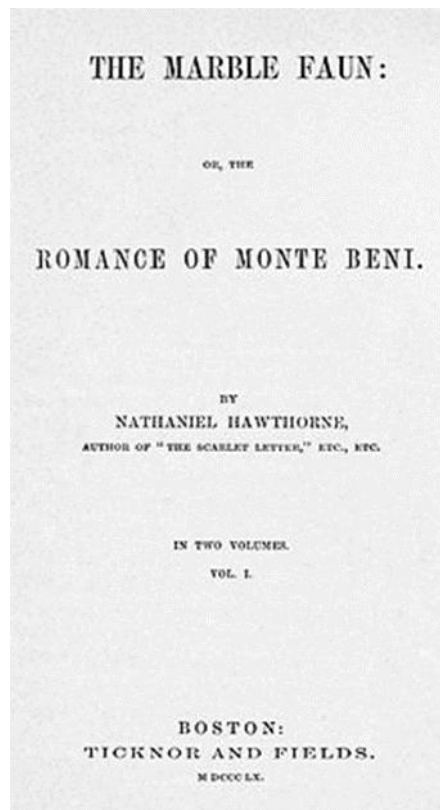
M D C C L I X.

Credit: Wikipedia



Frontispiece and title-page, first edition 1838

Credit: Wikipedia



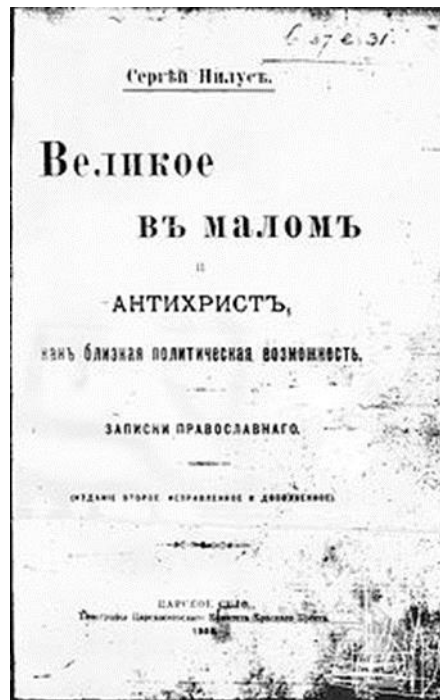
First edition title page

Credit: Wikipedia

In the field of Political Economy also, many European thinkers chose to describe the Jews pejoratively as the "Creators of Capitalism".

Karl Marx, himself a Jew, argued that earning a living from collecting interest or acting as a middleman was an unjust and exploitative aspect of Capitalism. He singled out Jews for particular criticism and blamed Judaism for the exploitation and alienation of workers. He argued that Jews not just embraced capitalism but that they "embodied" it.

It is a tragic irony of monumental proportions that the Jews were simultaneously considered 'Embodiment of Capitalism' and 'Collaborators of Communism'.



*(Programa zavoevaniya mira evreyami)*

The Jewish Programme to Conquer the World

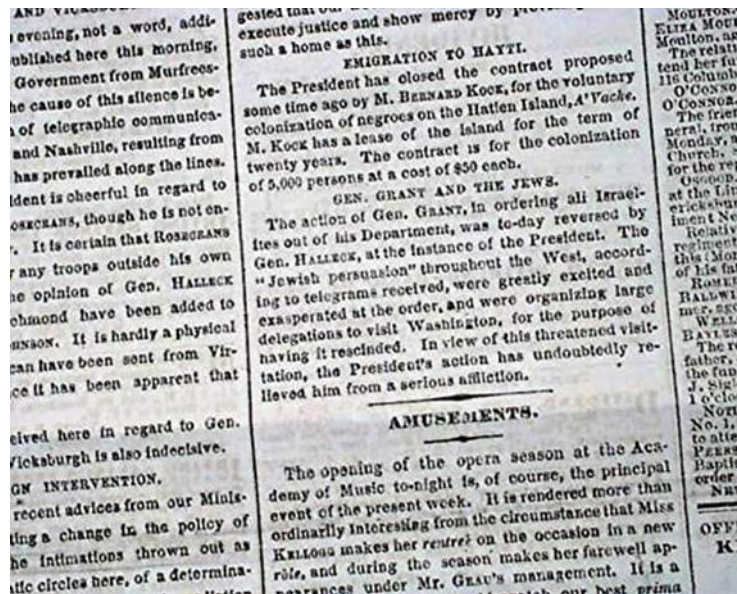
Credit: Wikipedia

The expression 'The Jewish Bolshevism' became popular after the October 1917 Revolution in Russia in the propaganda of the anti-Bolshevik "White" forces during the Civil War. That derogatory idea spread worldwide in the 1920s with the publication and circulation of the fabricated antisemitic text called, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. First published in Russia in 1903, translated into multiple languages and disseminated internationally in the early part of the 20th century, it gained notoriety because of the Jewish ancestry of some leading Bolsheviks, notably Leon Trotsky. Henry Ford funded printing of 500,000 copies of the tract that were distributed throughout the United States. It has been described as "probably the most influential work of antisemitism ever written".

The label "Judeo-Bolshevism" was used in Nazi Germany to equate Jews with communists, implying that the Communism served Jewish interests and that all Jews were communists. Jews and Communists were blamed for having allegedly betrayed Germany during World War I, resulting in Germany having to sign The Treaty of Versailles. In Poland, before World War II, Żydokomuna was used in the same way to allege that Jews were conspiring with the Soviet Union to invade Poland. According to André Gerrits, "The myth of Jewish Communism was one of the most popular and widespread political prejudices in the first half of the 20th century, in Eastern Europe in particular".

It is a tragic irony of monumental proportions that the Jews were simultaneously considered 'Embodiment of Capitalism' and 'Collaborators of Communism'.

During the American Civil War, tensions over race and immigration produced the worst outbreak of anti-Semitism. Americans on both sides of the slavery debate, denounced Jews as disloyal war profiteers and accused them of driving Christians out of business.



General Grant's GENERAL ORDER NO. 11

Expelling JEWS Abraham Lincoln Voids 1862

NEW YORK TIMES, Jan. 5, 1863

Major General Ulysses S. Grant was greatly influenced by such sentiments and issued General Order No. 11 on December 17, 1862, expelling Jews from areas under his control in western Tennessee:

"The Jews, as a class violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasury Department and also other department orders, are hereby expelled within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order".

Although the order was later rescinded by President Abraham Lincoln, it had already been enforced in a number of towns with tragic consequences.

Not everyone was ready to forgive Ulysses S. Grant for his order. Puck Magazine depicted Grant as crying "crocodile tears" for the persecution of Jewish people in Russia while still believing in the spirit of General Orders No. 11.

Major General Grant went on to issue another order which stated that "No Jews are to be permitted to travel on the road southward". His aide, Colonel John V. DuBois, went to elaborate that *"all speculators, Jews, and vagabonds with no honest means of support must leave the district"*, stressing, *"The Israelites especially should be kept out, they are such an intolerable nuisance"*.

Henry Ford not only funded printing of 500,000 copies of the fabricated antisemitic text called, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion for distribution throughout the United States, he also ensured its publication in his newspaper 'The Dearborn Independent'. He believed that Jews were responsible for starting both the World Wars to profit from them: "International financiers are behind all wars, the international Jew: German Jews, French Jews, English Jews. Here (in America), the Jew is a threat".



The article that signaled the beginning of Henry Ford's seven-year hate campaign against the Jews. (COLLECTIONS OF THE HENRY FORD MUSEUM, GREENFIELD VILLAGE)

Credit: Wikipedia.org

In 1922, Harvard announced that it was considering a quota system for Jewish students. Although the idea was eventually dropped, the quota was enforced in many colleges through underhanded techniques. As late as 1945, Dartmouth College openly defended a quota system against Jewish students. However, in this, it was not alone, many universities and medical and dental schools instituted it as 'Numerus Clausus' (closed number). They included Harvard, Columbia, Cornell and Boston Universities. In 1925, Yale, which already had admissions preferences for 'character', 'solidity' and 'physical characteristics', added a program of 'legacy preference' admission spots for children of Yale alumni in an explicit attempt to

reduce the increasing number of Jews in the student body. That was soon copied by other Ivy League schools, and admissions of Jews were kept down to 10% until the 1950s. Such policies began to be discarded in the early 1960s, but continued at Yale till 1970.

President Truman, the 33rd President of the United States, (1945 -1953) was sympathetic to the idea of Jewish homeland in Palestine. As a senator (1934-40), he had supported the cause of Zionism. The State and Defense Departments of the administration however, were opposed to the establishment of a Jewish state in the area long populated and dominated by Arabs. When Secretary of Defense James Forrestal highlighted the importance of Saudi oil to America, Truman cut him short by saying, he would decide his policy on the basis of justice, not oil!

The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was a proposal by the United Nations, which recommended a partition of Mandatory Palestine at the end of the British Mandate. On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted the Plan as Resolution 181 (II).

The resolution recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States and a Special International Regime for the city of Jerusalem. The Partition Plan, a four-part document attached to the resolution, provided for the termination of the Mandate, the progressive withdrawal of British armed forces and the delineation of boundaries between the two States and Jerusalem. Part I of the Plan stipulated that the Mandate would be terminated as soon as possible and the United Kingdom would withdraw no later than 1 August 1948. The new states would come into existence two months after the withdrawal, but no later than 1 October 1948. The Plan sought to address the conflicting objectives and claims of two competing movements, Palestinian nationalism and Jewish nationalism, or Zionism. The Plan also called for Economic Union between the proposed states, and for the protection of religious and minority rights.

The Plan, devised in cooperation with Jewish organizations, was accepted by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, despite dissatisfaction over territorial limits set on the proposed Jewish State. Arab leaders and governments rejected it and indicated an unwillingness to accept any form of territorial division.

Immediately after adoption of the Resolution by the General Assembly, a civil war broke out and the plan was not implemented.

Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948 and was the first to sign the Israeli Declaration of Independence, which he had helped to write. Israel's founding father recognized that the strong attachment of Palestinian Arabs to the land would be an insurmountable obstacle and in his address to the United Nations on 2 October 1947, he had expressed his doubts

about the likelihood of peace: "This is our native land; it is not as birds of passage that we return to it. But it is situated in an area engulfed by Arabic-speaking people, mainly followers of Islam. Remember what Arab delegates from Palestine and its neighbors say in the General Assembly and in other places. The talk of Arab-Jewish amity sounds fantastic, for the Arabs do not wish it, they will not sit at the same table with us, they want to treat us as they do the Jews of Bagdad, Cairo, and Damascus".

If you can't come to town,  
phone telephone 4607

Lighting, Heating, Cooling, Refrigeration

**CARL MARX**  
1 PRINCESS MARY AVE., JERUSALEM

# THE PALESTINE POST

JERUSALEM  
SUNDAY, MAY 16, 1948

PRICE: 10 MILA  
VOL. XXXII, No. 674

**THE PALESTINE POST**

THE SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT has returned to The Palestine Post office, Haugeli Street, Jerusalem, Tel. 6250.

# STATE OF ISRAEL IS BORN

PRICE: 10 MILA  
VOL. XXXII, No. 674

The first independent Jewish State in 19 centuries was born in Tel Aviv as the British Mandate over Palestine came to an end at midnight on Friday, and it was immediately subjected to the test of fire. As "Medinat Yisrael" (State of Israel) was proclaimed, the battle for Jerusalem raged, with most of the city falling to the Jews. At the same time, President Truman announced that the United States would accord recognition to the new State. A few hours later, Palestine was invaded by Moslem armies from the south, east and north, and Tel Aviv was raided from the air. On Friday the United Nations Special Assembly adjourned after adopting a resolution to appoint a mediator but without taking any action on the Partition Resolution of November 29.

Yesterday the battle for the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road was still under way, and two Arab villages were taken. In the north, Acre town was captured, and the Jewish Army consolidated its positions in Western Galilee.

### Most Crowded Hours in Palestine's History

Between Thursday night and this morning Palestine went through what by all standards must be among the most crowded hours in its history.

The Jewish population there was the angriest over the fate of the few hundred Hagdara cars and women in the Kfar Habor bloc of settlements near Hadera. Their surrender to a fully equipped superior foreign force desperately in need of a victory was a foregone conclusion. What could not be known, with an announcement about Thursday morning, was whether and to what extent the Hagdara and the "Yemen" Gypsies would receive official recognition for Palestine and, second, proper respect for the dead. Deaths on score of these anxious queasies have now been received.

On Friday afternoon, from Tel Aviv (the Jewish settlement in North-Harod), the Jewish Council met in a special session to consider action on the situation of Palestine by member states of the U.N.

In the afternoon, Jerusalem was subjected to shelling from the north.

Hagdara Jews throughout the country continued moving up and Jewish masses moved out of Western Galilee and against the Moslems, near the village of Migdal, inside Tzfat-Judea, last night, the situation and

### Jews Take Over Security Zones

The battle for Jerusalem, which began when the British forces withdrew on Friday morning, continued all day Friday and yesterday. The Jewish forces, which were still being held in the early hours of this morning, the battle entered its third day.

Reported efforts on Friday evening and again on Saturday by the U.N. Truce Commission to bring about a cease-fire were brought to naught when the Arab representatives failed to agree with the Jewish side.

On Friday morning, Jewish forces entered the Ramat Goshen and Ramat Goshen and began to re-occupy the buildings. Negotiations from Jews last year. This operation was almost completed, but beyond the western edge of Ramat Goshen, the Jews in Judea Road. The Arabs were forced back and the Hagdara Road was taken.

In other parts of the city fighting flared up. Jews were run over after another the area was attacked by the British. By last night, the situation and

### Egyptian Air Force Spitfires Bomb Tel Aviv; One Shot Down

Not far from the Tel Aviv international airport, reported on a Friday evening, a Spitfire was shot down by the Tel Aviv Air Force. The plane was shot down by the Tel Aviv Air Force. The plane was shot down by the Tel Aviv Air Force.

Mr. David Ben-Gurion, the Prime Minister, broadcast from Tel Aviv to the people of America yesterday morning. He spoke of the Jewish people's struggle for freedom and of the Jewish people's struggle for freedom.

In the north, the situation of the Hagdara and the "Yemen" Gypsies was still under way. The Hagdara and the "Yemen" Gypsies were still under way. The Hagdara and the "Yemen" Gypsies were still under way.

Jerusalem was still under way. The Hagdara and the "Yemen" Gypsies were still under way. The Hagdara and the "Yemen" Gypsies were still under way.

### U.S. Recognizes Jewish State

WASHINGTON, Sunday. — The United States today announced its recognition of the Jewish State. The United States today announced its recognition of the Jewish State.

The White House press secretary, Mr. Charles Ross, said in a statement today that the United States today announced its recognition of the Jewish State.

Mr. Ross said that the President had decided to announce the recognition of the Jewish State today.

### Proclamation by Head of Government

The creation of "Medinat Yisrael", the State of Israel, was proclaimed at midnight on Friday by Mr. David Ben-Gurion, until then Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive and now head of the State's Provisional Council of Government.

The first act of the Council of Government, as announced by Mr. Ben-Gurion, was to establish the State of Israel. The first act of the Council of Government, as announced by Mr. Ben-Gurion, was to establish the State of Israel.

The Council of Government, as announced by Mr. Ben-Gurion, was to establish the State of Israel. The Council of Government, as announced by Mr. Ben-Gurion, was to establish the State of Israel.

### 2 Columns Cross Southern Border

By WALTER GOLDEN  
J. E. GORDON  
J. E. GORDON

### Ezra Settlers Taken P.O.W.

Following the Kfar Habor (the Hagdara) settlement, the Hagdara and the "Yemen" Gypsies were still under way. The Hagdara and the "Yemen" Gypsies were still under way.

### Special Assembly Adjourns

Following the Kfar Habor (the Hagdara) settlement, the Hagdara and the "Yemen" Gypsies were still under way. The Hagdara and the "Yemen" Gypsies were still under way.

Truman recognized the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, eleven minutes after David Ben-Gurion proclaimed its creation. Of his decision to recognize the Israeli state, Truman wrote in his memoirs (1955): "Hitler had been murdering Jews right and left. The Jews needed some place where they could go. It is my attitude that the American government couldn't stand idly by, while the victims [of] Hitler's madness are not allowed to build new lives".

War-torn Europe, grateful for the US aid under the European Recovery Program (popularly known as Marshall Plan) worth \$17 billion (equivalent to \$205 billion in 2020), was easily persuaded and voted in favor of Truman's partition plan. All of Israel's neighbors rejected the plan.

Following the creation of Israel, Truman's 1948 election campaign went from anticipated failure to unexpected success. The powerful (and grateful) Jewish press barons played a significant role in this amazing turnaround!

Since its creation on May 14, 1948, there have been several military conflicts between Israeli forces and Arab forces, most notably in 1948–49, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982, and 2006.



A stream of Palestinian refugees on the Lebanon Road, on Nov. 4, 1948.

Credit: Aljazeera.com

The 1948 Arab-Israeli War pitted Israel against five Arab nations-Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon. By the end of the war in July 1949, territory under Israeli rule increased from 14,000 square kilometers agreed by the United Nations to 21,000 square kilometers.

The First Arab-Israeli conflict effectively, enlarged the theatre of war between the Jews and the Arab states.

In 1956, Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, with the objective of reopening the Straits of Tiran that Egypt had blocked to Israeli shipping since 1950. At the end of the campaign, Israel withdrew, but gained the guarantee that the Straits of Tiran would remain open to it, with United Nations Emergency Force deployment along the border as a guarantee.



In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed with the sole purpose of establishing a Palestinian Arab state on the land which once was under the British Mandate and which the PLO considered to be under illegal occupation of Israel. To achieve this objective, PLO swore to destroy the State of Israel.

In the months prior to June 1967, tensions rose between Israel and Egypt. Israel reiterated its post-1956 position that the closure of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping would be a cause for war.

On 5 June 1967, Israel launched a series of airstrikes against Egyptian airfields.

The Egyptians were caught off-guard, and almost the entire Egyptian Air Force was destroyed, giving Israel air supremacy. Simultaneously, the Israelis launched a ground offensive in the Gaza Strip and the Sinai, much to the surprise of Egyptians. After suffering serious losses, Nasser ordered evacuation of his forces from the Sinai Peninsula. Israeli forces rushed westward in pursuit and brought the Peninsula under their control.

One photograph from the conflict, which Israelis call the Six-Day War (an echo of the six days of creation in Genesis) captures the Zionist narrative, heralding reclamation, triumph, and hope: David Rubinger's iconic image of three Israeli paratroopers standing next to the Western Wall.



Credit: time.com

Egypt agreed to ceasefire on 8 June 1967 and Syria on 9 June 1967; the ceasefire agreement was signed on 11 June 1967.

In just six days, Israel had crippled the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian forces, killing over 20,000 troops, with less than 1,000 casualties of its own. Israel seized the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria.



The sporadic fighting that followed the Six-Day War of 1967 developed into full-scale war in 1973. On October 6, 1973 on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, it was Israel's turn to be caught off guard by Egyptian forces crossing the Suez Canal and by Syrian forces crossing into the Golan Heights. The Arab armies this time, showed greater aggressiveness and fighting ability than in the previous wars, and the Israeli forces suffered heavy casualties. The Israeli army, however, reversed its early losses and pushed its way into Syrian territory and encircled the Egyptian army by crossing the Suez Canal and establishing forces on its west bank. However, it lost the fortifications along the Suez Canal that Egypt destroyed in its campaign.

The fighting, which lasted throughout the month of Ramadan, came to an end on October 26, 1973. Israel signed a formal cease-fire agreement with Egypt on November 11, 1973 and with Syria on May 31, 1974.

The Camp David Accords were a pair of political agreements signed by President Anwar Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin on 17 September 1978, after

twelve days of secret negotiations at Camp David. The two agreements were signed at the White House and were witnessed by President Carter. The second of these frameworks led to the 1979 Egypt–Israel peace treaty, which formally ended the state of war that had existed between the two countries for 30 years. Under the terms of the treaty, Israel returned the entire Sinai Peninsula to Egypt and in return, Egypt recognized Israel's right to exist. The two countries subsequently established diplomatic relations. Due to the agreement, Sadat and Begin jointly received the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize. The first framework which dealt with the Palestinian territories, was written without involving the Palestinians and was condemned by the U N and Arab nations.



Credit: diplomacy.state.gov

The Camp David accords changed the Middle Eastern Politics dramatically. Egypt was suspended from the Arab League from 1979 until 1989.

Jordan's King Hussein saw it as a slap to the face when Sadat volunteered Jordan's participation in deciding how functional autonomy for the Palestinians would

work. With growing opposition in the Arab nations against Sadat, Jordan could not accept the Accords.

The Camp David Accords led to the disintegration of a united Arab front against Israel.

The normalization of relations between Israel and Egypt became effective in January 1980. Ambassadors were exchanged in February. The boycott laws were repealed by Egypt's National Assembly the same month and trade relations were established.

President Sadat was assassinated on 6 October 1981 by members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad during the annual military parade.

On June 5, 1982, increased hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians resulted in the Israeli bombing of Beirut and southern Lebanon, where the Palestine Liberation Organization had established a number of bases. By June 14, 1982, Israeli army encircled Beirut and started negotiations with the PLO, resulting in mutual withdrawals from occupied positions in Lebanon.

#### **In 1982 after Israel-Egypt peace treaty**



The First Intifada (Uprising) consisted of a series of protests and riots in the West Bank, Gaza Strip against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Although, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories began in 1967, the Intifada found its first expression in 1987. The intifada lasted from 9 December 1987 to 13 September 1993.



Credit: bodhicommons.org



Credit: thenation.com



Credit: [foreignaffairs.com](http://foreignaffairs.com)



Credit: [leftvoice.org](http://leftvoice.org), Creator: Jean-Claude Coutausse

The First Intifada was a turning point in the Israel-Palestinian relations. While it symbolized the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinians, it also displayed the steely determination of Israel to defend its Cause at any cost.

The first Oslo Accord (Oslo I) ended the First Intifada by working out a timetable for the peace process and a plan for an interim Palestinian government in parts of Gaza and the West Bank. The agreement was signed at a public ceremony in Washington, D.C., on 13 September 1993 and was witnessed by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.



Credit: news.bbc.co.uk

Arafat returned to Gaza in 1994 after being in exile for 27 years to head the newly-formed Palestinian Authority.

The Oslo II Accord was signed on 28 September 1995 by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and witnessed by US President Bill Clinton as well as by representatives of Russia, Egypt, Jordan, Norway, and the European Union in Washington, D.C.

The agreement is built on the foundations of the Oslo I Accord and is called an interim agreement because it was supposed to be the basis for subsequent negotiations for a comprehensive peace agreement. Several additional agreements were concluded following Oslo II, but negotiations did not produce a final peace agreement. The 2002 Road map for peace abandoned the Oslo Accords and envisioned a rather loose scheme of withdrawal.

Done at Washington DC, this 28th day of September, 1995.

Y. Rabin  
Shimon Peres

For the Government of  
the State of Israel

Y. Arafat

For the PLO

William J. Clinton  
Witnessed by:

W. Christopher

The United States of America

A. Voronin

The Russian Federation

Elis

The Arab Republic of Egypt

Abdullah

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Jonas Gahrstad

The Kingdom of Norway

Raia Orin

The European Union

The Second Intifada, known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada lasted 4 years, 4 months, 1 week and 4 days (28 September 2000 – 8 February 2005) and the chief reason was the widespread frustration among the Palestinians because of the failure to reach a final agreement on the peace process, with both sides blaming each other for the failure of the talks. There were four principal obstacles: Occupied territories, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, Palestinian refugees and their right of return, and Israeli security concerns. The trigger to the violent protests was the visit of Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount.



Credit: the nation.com



Credit: jpost.com

Both sides had their stories on what caused the Second Intifada. The government of Israel asserted that, *"The immediate catalyst for the violence was the breakdown of the Camp David negotiations and the widespread appreciation in the international community of Palestinian responsibility for the impasse"*. According to it, the Palestinian violence was planned by the PA leadership, aimed at *"provoking and incurring Palestinian casualties as a means of regaining the diplomatic initiative"*.

The Palestine Liberation Organization denied that the Intifada was planned, and asserted that *"Camp David represented nothing less than an attempt by Israel to extend the force it exercises on the ground to negotiations."*

The Sharm el-Sheikh Summit of 8 February 2005 ended the Second Intifada. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon agreed to cessation of violence on both sides.



Credit: economist.com

Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) is a Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist, militant Palestinian organization. It was founded in 1987, soon after the First Intifada broke out, as an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Co-founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin said in 1987, and the Hamas Charter affirmed in 1988, that Hamas was founded to liberate Palestine, including modern-day Israel, from Israeli

occupation and to establish an Islamic state in the area that is now Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.



Hamas logo



Hamas parade, Credit: upi.com

Israel and Hamas have engaged in several wars of varying intensity. Hamas' military wing has launched attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers, often describing them as retaliations. Its tactics have included suicide bombings and rocket attacks.

In the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, Hamas won a majority in the PNA Parliament, defeating the PLO-affiliated Fatah party. After the elections,

the EU, the UN and the US made assistance to the PNA conditional upon its commitment to nonviolence, recognition of the state of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements. Hamas rejected those conditions, which led them to suspend assistance program and Israel to impose economic sanctions on the Hamas-led administration.

Fatah (formerly the Palestinian National Liberation Movement), is a Palestinian nationalist political party and the largest faction of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization).



Fatah party's logo



Yasser Arafat



Mahmoud Abbas

Credit: Wikipedia.org

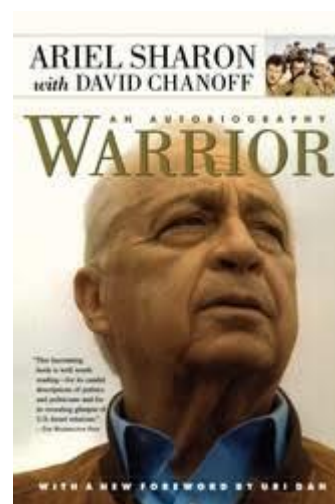
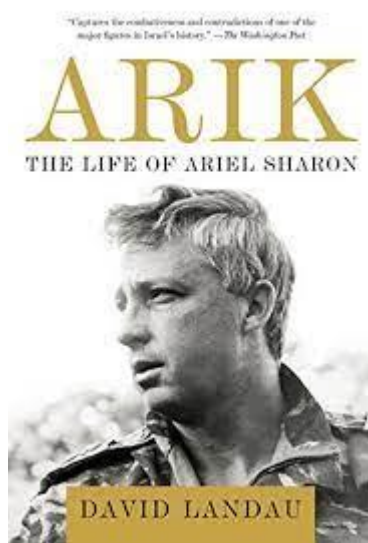
Fatah led Palestine's revolutionary struggle in the past and maintained a number of militant groups under the leadership of its founder-Chairman Yasser Arafat, until his death in 2004. In 2009, Mahmoud Abbas was elected chairman.

After the 2006 election, Hamas controls the Gaza strip and Fatah the West Bank.



Credit: usatoday.com

Ariel Sharon (born Ariel Scheinermann) the greatest military field commander Israel has ever known, was born in pre-state Israel on 26 February 1928. Sharon joined the Jewish paramilitary group Haganah in 1942 at age 14 to combat Arab attackers.



He commanded an infantry company in 1948 in the Israel War of Independence that created the Jewish state. He headed daring commando raids in the 1950s into Egypt, Jordan and Syria. In the Six-Day War, he commanded an armored division that swept into the Sinai desert to defeat stunned Egyptian forces in an operation studied by U.S. military planners for its innovations. In the Yom Kippur War of 1973, his division surrounded the entire Egyptian Third Army, forcing its surrender.

Ari Shavit, an Israeli reporter and writer wrote a very fascinating, detailed profile of Sharon for the New Yorker in January 2006, while Sharon was in the neurosurgery unit of Hadassah Hospital having slipped into coma, never to come out of it and succumbing to it eight years later on 11 January 2014.

Shavit's biographical essay gives us an extraordinary insight into not only the man, but also the nation he tried to build and safeguard from 'friends' and enemies.

Sharon was a towering figure and he loved Israel to death. He always seemed to be in a battle, pushing onward, pushing the state borders transforming a modest small state into a regional super power.

He liked to define himself not as an Israeli but as a Jew. Israel's *raison d'être*, he used to say, is to be the place where the Jews will finally be cured of their mortal illness, their "eternal wandering." He felt great uncertainty about the ability of the Jews to maintain sovereignty, and to hold on to the land.

His primary concern was with their future: "*What will become of the Jews in thirty years' time, and what will become of them in three hundred years' time?*" He complained that young Israelis weren't familiar with their history. They didn't feel passionately about the land the way he did. "*One generation after another is drifting away from anything Jewish,*" he lamented.

He was skeptical about the value of peace agreements. He believed the 1948 War of Independence had not ended, and that Israel must be prepared for a struggle that would last for generations.

*"The conflict isn't between us and the Palestinians," he told Shavit. "The conflict is between us and the Arab world. And the problem at the heart of the conflict is that the Arab world does not recognize the Jews' inherent right to have a Jewish state in the land where the Jewish people began. This is the main problem. This also applies to Egypt, with which we have a cold peace. It also applies to Jordan, with which we have a very close strategic relationship, but this is a relationship between governments, not between peoples. The problem is not 1967. The problem is the profound non-recognition by the Arab world of Israel's birth-right. This problem will not be solved by an agreement. It will not be solved by a speech. Anyone who promises that it's possible to end the conflict within a year or two years or three is mistaken. Anyone who promises peace now is blind*

*to the way things are. Even after the disengagement, we will not be able to rest on our laurels. We will not be able to sit under our fig tree and our vine. It may be that we will never have peace, the conflict may never be resolved. If it is ever resolved, it will be in a very long process.”*

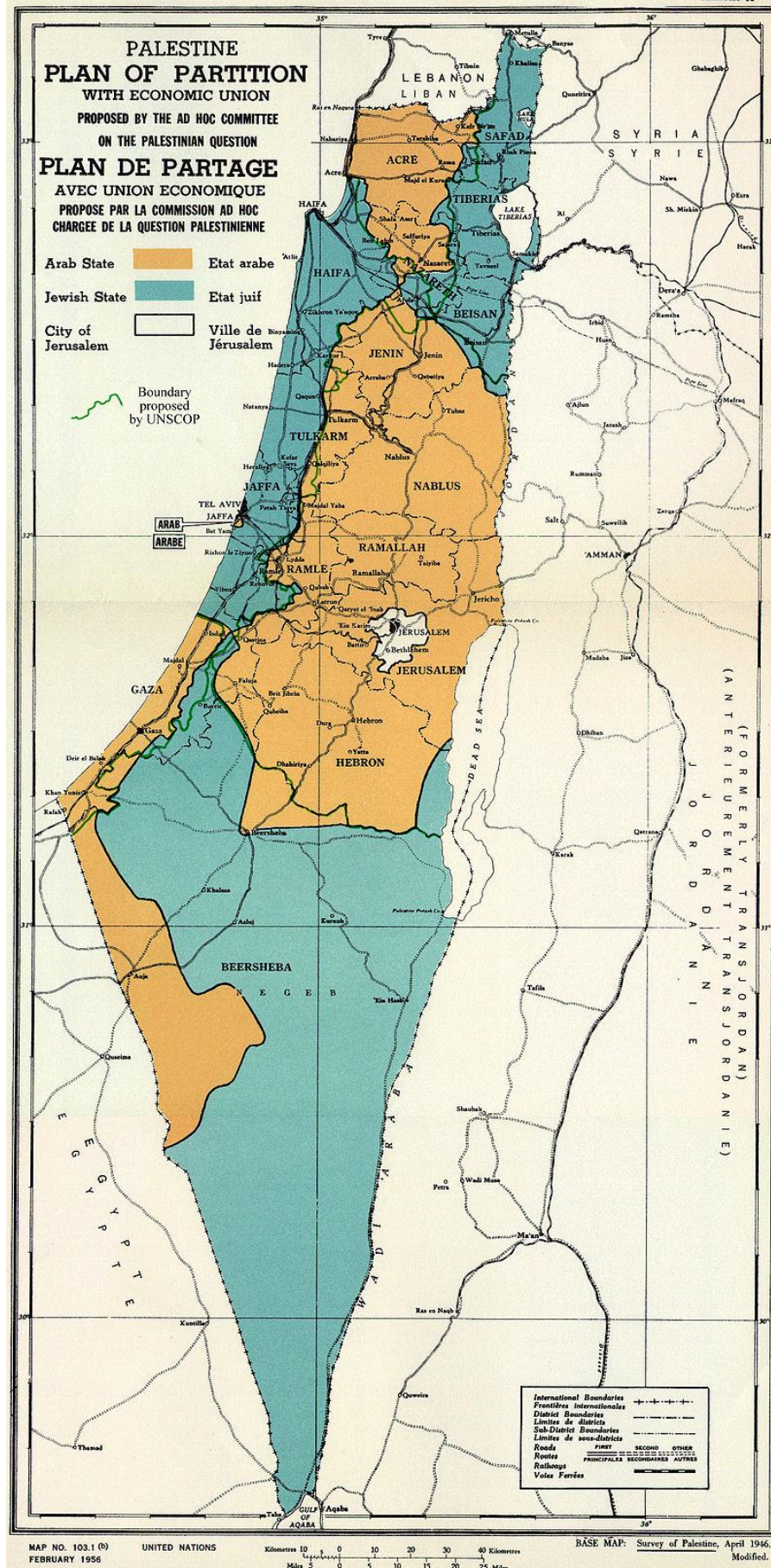
In 2000, at Camp David, Barak and Arafat debated unsuccessfully, a compromise on control of the Temple Mount, the site of the Western Wall and the Al Aqsa mosque. Sharon was not prepared for such negotiations. *“This is the place that is most sacred to the Jewish people,”* he said. *“It is untenable that it not be under Israeli responsibility.”*

There is a passage in that essay of Shavit where Sharon quotes Moshe Dayan, which reveals Israel’s policy of proactive deterrent action; *“As Moshe Dayan said, we cannot defend every family and every person in the country. We can promise only that their blood will exact a price. Deterrence is what enables us to live here. This is how it was in the past, this is the way it is in the present, and this is also the way it will be in the future. Today, the Jews are in less danger because Israel is strong,”* he went on. *“But would I rely on the world with respect to the Jews? No. I don’t rely on anyone in this matter.”*

David Ben-Gurion (16 October 1886 – 1 December 1973) was Sharon’s mentor and he often spoke of him with moist eyes.



Ever since the creation of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, the debate has raged in the various political forums about the nature of its statehood: One state, Two states or more. The UN appointed Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) proposed an independent Arab State, an independent Jewish State, and the City of Jerusalem under an International Trusteeship System.



The seven decades since its creation have in a certain way clarified the matters with regard to the options that were envisaged by the UNSCOP. As Judy Maltz pointed out in the Haaretz issue of June 10, 2019, *“There are now so many options on the table that when Israelis and Palestinians talk about a one-state or a two-state solution, they often mean very different things. And even when they talk among themselves, Israelis are not necessarily on the same page”*.

Two states for two peoples



In broad terms, the two-state solution involves the establishment of an independent and demilitarized Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to most versions of the plan, the two territories would be connected by a 40-kilometer (25-mile) corridor that would include a road, a railway and pipes carrying utilities like gas and water. Where exactly the border will be drawn is up for debate, but the general consensus is that Israel's pre-1967 border will serve as a benchmark. During numerous rounds of negotiations held over the past 20 years,

Israelis and Palestinians have agreed in principle that Israel would be allowed to annex large settlement blocs located near the Green Line as part of a two-state agreement in order to minimize the number of settlers who would have to be uprooted. In exchange, Israel would hand over a more or less equivalent amount of land to the Palestinians for their future state.

The Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, together with Tel Aviv University, conducts periodic surveys to gauge Palestinian and Israeli support for different initiatives that aim to resolve the conflict. The June 2018, found that support for the two-state solution among both Palestinian and Israeli respondents had fallen below the halfway mark – to exactly 43 percent on each side, its lowest level in two decades.

Explaining the decline in support for the two-state solution among Palestinians, Dr. Khalil Shikaki, the director of PSR said, *“The main driver is the perception that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible, and that’s because of certain perceptions about Israel’s long-term aspirations, about settlement building, about the rightward shift in Israeli society, and – particularly in the past two years – the sense that the U.S. administration is no longer interested in promoting a two-state solution, and more recently, that the Arab world has essentially abandoned the Palestinians.”*

The future status of Jerusalem is also a major divisive issue, with Israeli supporters of a two-state solution unwilling to relinquish control of the holy sites.

### The confederation

Supporters of an Israeli-Palestinian confederation see their model as an improved and less disruptive alternative to the two-state solution because under this proposal, all inhabitants of the land would stay where they are. Leading the campaign to create an Israeli-Palestinian confederation – an idea that has enjoyed considerable buzz in recent years, particularly among Israelis who have despaired of the two-state solution – is a movement called A Land for All (also known as Two States, One Homeland). Founded by Israeli journalist Meron Rapoport and Palestinian activist Awni Almsni, it calls for the establishment of two states more or less along the 1967 Green line, but with free movement between them.

A prominent example of a confederation is the European Union: sovereign states that came together and assigned power upward to an overseeing body. In the Israeli-Palestinian version, as its supporters envision it, each state would have its own government and legislative organs, but specific issues – like water management, the environment and natural resources – would be jointly administered. There would also be a certain degree of cooperation in matters related to security and the economy.



In their vision, Jews and Palestinians can take up residency in either state, but Jews living in Palestine would have Israeli citizenship and could only vote in Israeli elections while Palestinians who live in Israel would have Palestinian citizenship and could only vote in the Palestinian election. Israeli Arabs would retain all their existing rights as citizens. Under the plan, the newly formed Palestinian state could grant citizenship to Palestinian refugees and Israel would continue to grant citizenship to Jews in the Diaspora, but only a limited number of Palestinian refugees would be allowed to return to live in Israel.

Most observers dismiss the confederation idea as a one-state solution in disguise. Arieli, a two-state advocate says, *"It's a nice idea, but not very practical."* *"How are we supposed to integrate the two economies when there is such a huge gap between them? When per capita income in Israel is nearly \$40,000 and in the West Bank just \$3,000? Freedom of movement and open borders is a great idea, but let's not forget where we're living. They are making certain assumptions about human nature that have no basis in reality."*

## One-State Solution



The one-state solution covers such a broad spectrum of ideas that both Israelis on the far right and the far left count themselves among its supporters – as do some Palestinians.

On one extreme are those who support an exclusively Jewish or Palestinian state that requires the expulsion or transfer of the other group, and on the other are those who dream of one democratic state – neither Jewish nor Palestinian – with equal rights for all its citizens. In the middle are various forms of Israeli annexation, some of which include citizenship and voting rights for the Palestinians and some, which don't. Most of these annexation proposals have been dismissed by their critics as either on the path to apartheid or apartheid outright. Almost all Israeli proposals for annexation do not include the Gaza Strip. Here are some of the main options being discussed under this category.

One democratic state – This proposal calls for the establishment of a bi-national state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, with full and equal

rights for all its citizens. By definition, that would spell an end to the idea of both a Jewish national homeland and a Palestinian national homeland. “*Think of the U.S.A.,*” says Jeff Halper, a founding member of a relatively new Palestinian-Israeli movement to establish a single democratic state in “*historic Palestine.*”

The following five versions of a one-state solution draw support mainly from the Israeli right. None of them includes Gaza, and the new state created in all of them would still be called Israel. Each requires the Palestinians to forfeit their dream of an independent national homeland.

Annexation of West Bank with citizenship for Palestinians: This solution, supported mainly by the Israeli right, including members of the Likud, calls for annexing the entire West Bank and granting citizenship to all the Palestinians living there. A prominent advocate of this version of the one-state solution was the late Moshe Arens, a former defense minister in the Likud government. Based on current demographic trends, if such a solution is implemented, many Israeli Jews fear they could lose their majority.

Annexation of the West Bank without (or conditional) citizenship for Palestinians: A plan drafted by Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely of Likud would allow Palestinians to obtain citizenship in Israel under this sort of one-state model, but only after Israel successfully executes a grand plan to take in two million Jewish immigrants from around the world. This massive population boost would guarantee that the Jews achieve and maintain their majority in the Greater Land of Israel. Hotovely would also make Israeli citizenship for Palestinians conditional on their agreement to enlist in some form of national service.

Then there are some variations of the Annexation idea: Likud lawmaker Miki Zohar backs granting Palestinians residency and certain rights, but not the right to vote in national elections. Bezalel Smotrich of Habayit Hayehudi – arguably the most right-wing member of the outgoing Knesset – has proposed annexing the West Bank and giving the Palestinians a choice between pledging allegiance to the Jewish state or leaving. Even those who stay, would not be allowed to vote in Israeli elections.

Partial annexation: This solution is seen as a compromise for those who reject the two-state solution because they fear an independent Palestinian state would pose a military threat to Israel on its eastern border but at the same time realize that annexing the entire West Bank would pose a demographic threat to the Jewish state. Conceived by Naftali Bennett, a right-wing politician (who is the current Prime Minister), the plan would have Israel annex Area C of the West Bank. This is where the Israeli settlements are located and it accounts for about 60 percent of the entire territory.

## Partial annexation

- Areas A and B
- Area C



Under the Oslo Accords, which were signed in the 1990s with the objective of paving the way for the creation of an independent Palestinian state, the West Bank was split into three sections.

In Area A, which includes all the major Palestinian cities, the Palestinian Authority has more or less full autonomy. In Area B, also comprised of Palestinian towns and villages, the Palestinians maintain control over civilian life, but Israel is in charge of security. In Area C, where an estimated 300,000 Palestinians live, Israel retains full control.

Under Bennett's plan, all Palestinians living in Area C would be offered citizenship. He supports granting the Palestinians some form of autonomy in areas A and B, but not an independent state. Bennett would eliminate all military checkpoints, and Palestinians would be allowed to travel without restriction in the West Bank, but Israel would maintain military control over the entire area. The three areas in the West Bank are not contiguous, however, with Area A and Area B situated within Area C.

Bennett's plan effectively creates 165 separate Palestinian enclaves within the West Bank. And If Israel annexes Area C, then the border would not be a smooth line, but rather, an extremely complicated maze.

## Federation

Think of the United States, Germany or Switzerland. In a federation, there's one central government, but the country is divided up into states, provinces or cantons which have considerable power. This plan calls for applying Israeli law to the entire West Bank and giving full citizenship and voting rights to all the Palestinians living there. By dividing up the new expanded country in a certain way, however, the Jewish population would be able to maintain its majority in the political system even if it loses its majority in the population.



Federation map

The Federation Movement - co-founded five years ago by Emanuel Shahaf, a former senior official in the Mossad, and Aryeh Hess, a former executive at the Jewish Agency - envisions an Israel that is divided into 30 cantons. According to the plan, 20 of these cantons would have a Jewish majority while only 10 would have a Palestinian majority. Alongside the Knesset, a new assembly would be set up, comprised of representatives of the cantons.

This plan for breaking up the country into cantons would help guarantee that Jews continue to have the political upper hand. The plan would see the dissolution of the Palestinian Authority and all the West Bank settlements would be preserved. All matters of security would be overseen by the Israel Defense Forces. Among Israeli lawmakers, a vocal advocate of such a solution is Likud's Yehudah Glick, best known as leader of the campaign to allow Jews the right to pray on Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

Tamara Cofman-Wittes, Senior Fellow at Brookings writing on May 14, 2021 described the current crisis between Israelis and Palestinians in East Jerusalem, between Arabs and Jews in cities inside Israel, and between Israel and Hamas, as the death of the two-state solution. She blamed both Israel's political party system and the Palestinian national movement's decayed one-party dictatorship for the situation.

Khaled Elgindy, Senior Fellow, Middle East Institute sees President Trump's decision in December 2017 to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital (overturning 70 years of U.S. policy and international consensus), as a turning point in the American-sponsored peace process between Israelis and Palestinians. Despite the close bonds between the US and Israel, it was seen in the words of the veteran American negotiator Aaron David Miller, 'as an effective, if not an honest broker'. Trump, no respecter of history changed that perception with his 'real estate solution'.

Ian Steven Lustick, the American political scientist at the University of Pennsylvania writing in the NY Times on September 14, 2013, explained why all sides to the problem cling to the illusion of the two-state solution. The Palestinian Authority needs its people to believe that progress is being made toward a two-state solution so it can continue to get economic aid and diplomatic support, the Israeli governments need it to shield the country from international opprobrium and American politicians need it to show that they are working toward a diplomatic solution, to keep the pro-Israel lobby quiet.

Haidar Eid, Professor at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza wrote in the online site of Al Jazeera on 19 September 2021, 'It is time Israel and the West admit the two-state solution is dead'.

His gloomy admonition was based on his reading of the survey conducted in August 2021 by the influential US magazine Foreign Affairs on the two-state solution among authorities with specialized expertise and some leading generalists in the field. It asked the question “Is the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict no longer viable?” to which the 64 experts were supposed to indicate their agreement or disagreement and explain their stance with a brief comment.

## Is the Two-State Solution Still Viable?

Foreign Affairs magazine Survey

August 24, 2021

### DEBATE STATEMENT

The two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is no longer viable.

Sample size: 64 Experts

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11	13	7	21	12

So, if the Two-State Solution is dead, as Haider Eid says, is the One-State Solution the answer?

Yousef Munayyer, the Palestinian-American writer confidently declared in the Foreign Affairs magazine issue of November/December 2019 that “There Will Be a One-State Solution’, the question is what kind of state it will be?

Dimi (Dmitry) Reider, an Israeli journalist writing in the New Statesman on 24 May 2021 asked if it is time for the world to consider a one-state approach. The main reason being that the two-state solution favored by global leaders is out of sync with the lived reality of Israelis and Palestinians.

Hamas is still in control inside the Gaza Strip, Israel retains its vice grip on Gaza’s borders. Netanyahu’s successor is as unyielding as he was and Mahmoud Abbas is still irrelevant as before. This is the picture and the issue is friction between the Israeli government in Jerusalem on the one side and the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah and the Hamas government in Gaza on the other.

The two states solution hinges on contestation of the so-called Green Line, separating Gaza and the West Bank from Israel proper. The areas either side of this line are supposed to be different, and are currently managed unequally for different people. The Palestinian Authority, once set up as a proto-state, is reduced to policing Palestinian cities on Israel's behalf, and has not advanced Palestinian statehood in any meaningful way in 20 years.

The One-State reality is getting entrenched deeper every day. It is being shaped and managed quite deliberately by the Israeli government and it is acknowledged by most Palestinians grudgingly.

Israel is playing for time, and the world's two-state fixation serves as an excuse for the international community to do next to nothing.

Reider feels that the world community should begin a frank discussion on how safety, equality and self-determination can be achieved for both the Jews and the Palestinians without a partition framework. What kind of compromises are required? Should it be a liberal democracy, a binational state, a confederation, a con-sociational power-sharing mechanism? Because a single, unequal state is already in the making, being built to last for the perceived safety of one community at the expense of another. And the global community is letting one determined political faction in Israel lay down all the rules.

Kourosch Ziabari, the award-winning Iranian journalist interviewed Ian Lustick of the University of Pennsylvania for Fair Observer on July 13, 2020 and referred to his 2013 article in The New York Times titled 'Two-State Illusion' and asked him why he called the two-state solution an illusion?

Lustick said the answer lies in the 'Nash Equilibrium' in which both sides think they can get what they need by effectively giving up on what they really want. The two-state solution through negotiations is an illusion because people believe it is attainable when it is not.

Lustick went on to elaborate: The elements of the two-state solution that would make it acceptable to the Palestinians are those that make it unacceptable to the majority of Israeli Jews who now have firm control of the Israeli government and of the Israeli political arena. However, once a one-state reality is acknowledged, then both sides can agree that Jerusalem should be united and accessible to all who live within the state, that refugees within the borders of the state, at least, should have a right to move to and live in any part of the state, and that owners of land and property seized illegally or unjustly anywhere in the state can seek redress, or that discrimination in the right to own and inhabit homes anywhere in the state be brought to an end.

Lustick did not see a clear path from where the parties to the dispute are to that 'pretty picture' of the future. A one-state reality is far from pretty because the dynamics are not under the control of any one group.

Taking the example of Lincoln's America, he says, within the one-state reality, Jews and Arabs can find reasons to cooperate or oppose one another, leading to some sort of democratization. *"That is how, the US was transformed from a white-ruled country with masses of freed slaves who exercised no political rights whatsoever into a multiracial democracy. Lincoln never imagined this as a "one-state solution" — it was the unintended consequence of the union's annexation of the South, with its masses of black, non-citizen inhabitants, after the Civil War"*.

Where does the US (an effective, if not an honest broker) and the Biden administration fit in all this?

Hesham Youssef, Egypt's Ambassador to Canada writing for the United States Institute of Peace on June 10, 2021 summarized the Biden approach to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and its execution thus:

1. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not its foreign policy priority.
2. Its policy articulation is confined to broad end-game vision.
3. It seeks to reset relationship with the Palestinian leadership.
4. It exerted pressure on Israel to end the war on Gaza.
5. It is messaging that Jerusalem is still on the table.
6. It views Israelis and Palestinians as parties with rights and interests.
7. It considers settlement activity and annexation unilateral actions that undermine the prospect of a two-state solution.
8. It does not believe Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are possible now.
9. It seeks engagement with other stakeholders.
10. It supports normalization between Israel and Arab countries but is not prioritizing action.

It is clear that for now, the Biden administration's approach to the conflict is one of cautious gradualism. The immediate focus is on working with Egypt and other partners to stabilize the current fragile cease-fire.

Thomas L. Friedman feels that by inserting the US in the Middle East peace process at this 'Kissingerian' moment, he can reduce the pain that is going to be inflicted on all actors in this continuing tragedy.

Legislative elections were held in Israel on 23 March 2021 to elect the 120 members of the 24th Knesset. It was the fourth election in two years. Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett announced they formed a rotation government on 2 June 2021, which was approved on 13 June 2021. Although Netanyahu could not form the government this time, the long-serving Prime Minister (15 years) has made himself so indispensable that politics in Israel and Palestine is likely be shaped around him for years to come. Naftali Bennett, the country's new prime minister, is set to hold office for two years before handing off to Yair Lapid, a centrist politician, as per the agreement.



Benjamin Netanyahu

Naftali Bennett

Credit: timesofisrael.com



Yair Lapid

Credit: trtworld.com

Though Bennett's party trailed far behind both Netanyahu's (30 seats) and Lapid's (17) in the 2021 election, a shared desire to oust Netanyahu in different quarters, amidst political deadlock, saw Bennett (7 seats) emerge as Prime Minister.

Bennett, 49, is a technology millionaire who is a strong supporter of Jewish settlements and is opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state. A modern-Orthodox religious Jew, he is Israel's first religiously observant Prime Minister.

Bennett was an officer in an elite commando unit during his military service, which is required of most Jewish Israeli citizens. He entered Israeli politics in 2006 and served as a senior aid to Netanyahu until 2008. After leaving the government, he headed the Yesha Council, the main Israeli settler movement in the occupied West Bank, which Israel captured in 1967 and is claimed by the Palestinians.

In 2013 Bennett relaunched Jewish Home as a pro-settler party and called for annexation of the West Bank (which would be illegal under international law). He subsequently served as minister of defense, minister of education and minister of economy in Netanyahu's government.

In 2018, he allied with the New Right party, which in the 2021 election fought under Bennett's Yamina party banner

Bennett supports liberal economic policies, takes a hard line against Iran and is known for anti-Palestinian rhetoric. He has, in the past, referred to the prospects of a Palestinian state as "suicide" for Israel and has warned Israel's Arab citizens against becoming a 'fifth column.' He has expressed his conviction that 'Palestinian terrorists should be killed, not released.'

Bennett is in favor of increased Jewish control over the Temple Mount compound, in Jerusalem's contested Old City. In May 2021, Israeli police attacked Palestinians praying at al-Aqsa Mosque sparking a wave of unrest and the 11-day war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.



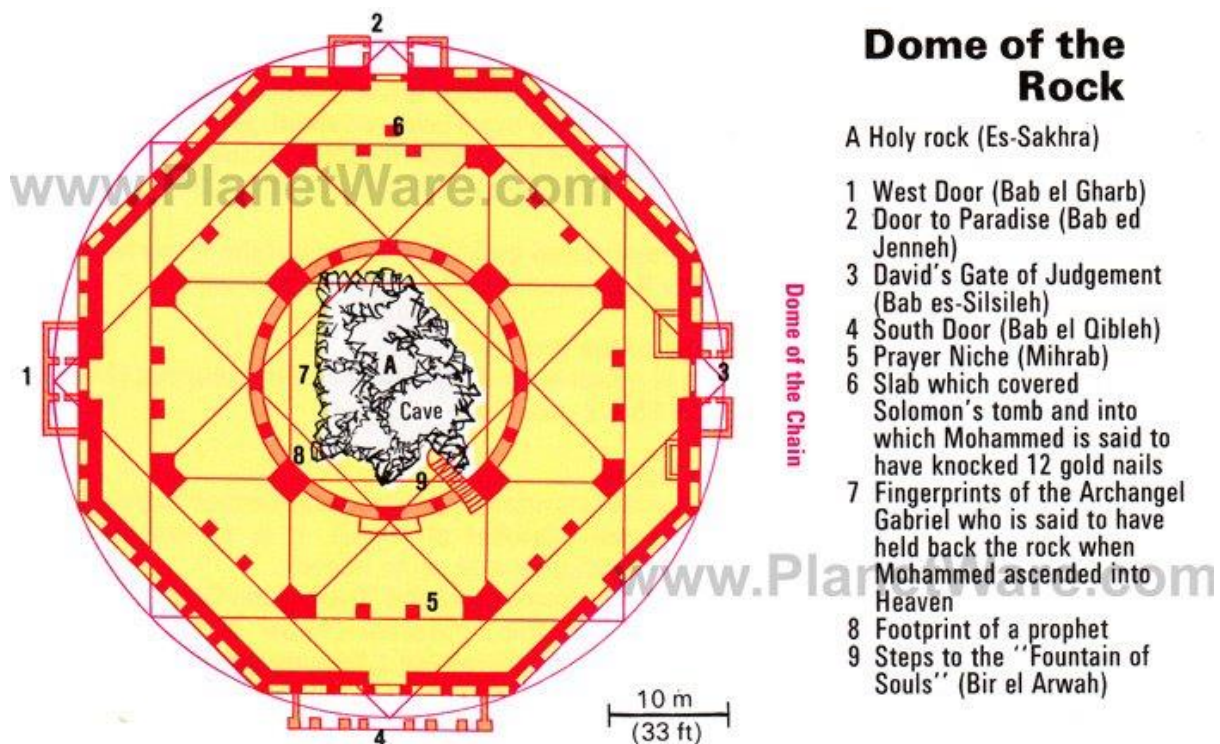
Israeli security forces clash with Palestinian protesters at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound

Bennett's ascent marks the rise of the next generation of far-right politicians in Israeli politics.

Jerusalem or *Yerushaláyim* or *al-Quds*, is one of the oldest cities in the world and is considered holy by the three Abrahamic religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

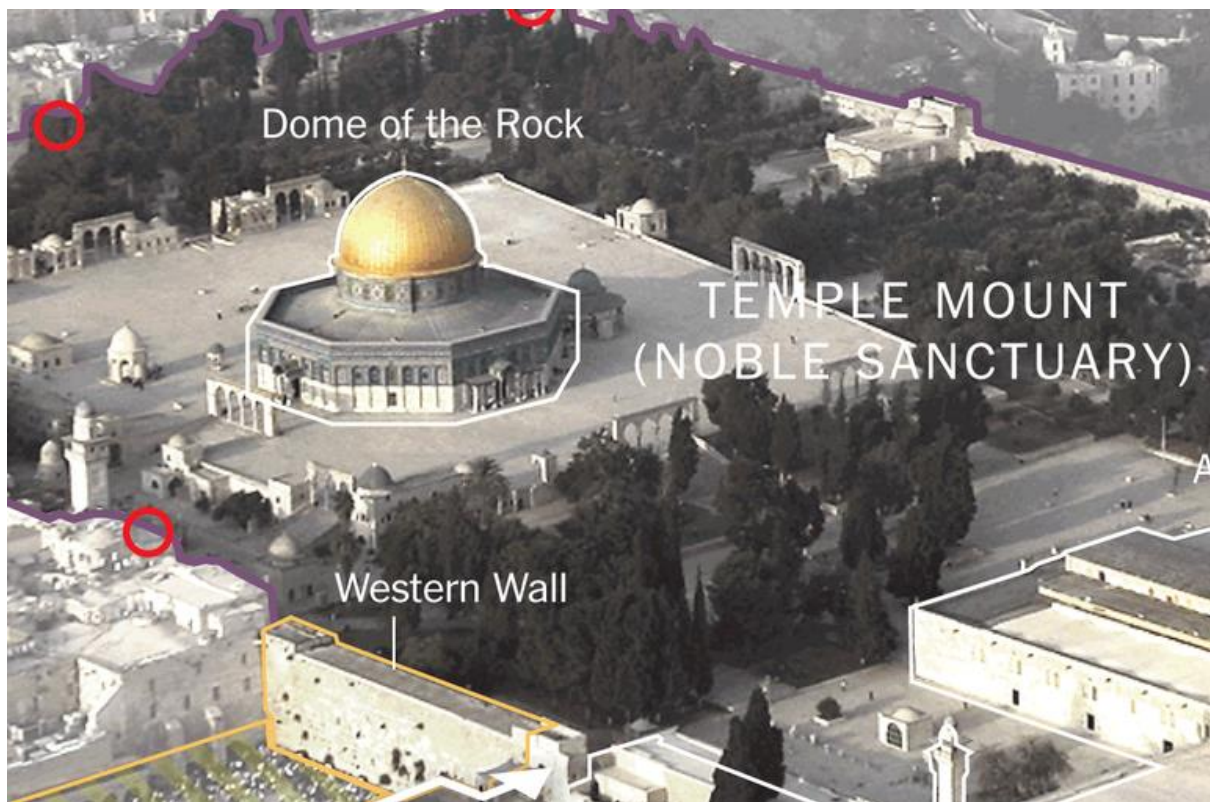
Jerusalem has been destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, captured and recaptured 44 times, and attacked 52 times. In the Canaanite period (14th century BCE), it was called *Urusalim*, meaning 'City of Shalem', a Canaanite deity. During the Israelite period, the city developed into the religious and administrative center of the Kingdom of Judah in the 8th century BCE. In 1538, the city walls were rebuilt around Jerusalem under Suleiman the Magnificent. Today those walls define the Old City, which has been traditionally divided into four-quarters, as the Armenian, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Quarters.

According to the Bible, King David established it as the capital of the United Kingdom of Israel, and his son King Solomon, constructed the First Temple. The holiness of Jerusalem in Christianity was reinforced by the New Testament account of Jesus's crucifixion there. In Islamic tradition, Muhammad ascended to heaven from here. This small area of less than a square km, the Old City is home to sites of great religious importance; among them the Temple Mount with its Western Wall, Dome of the Rock, al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



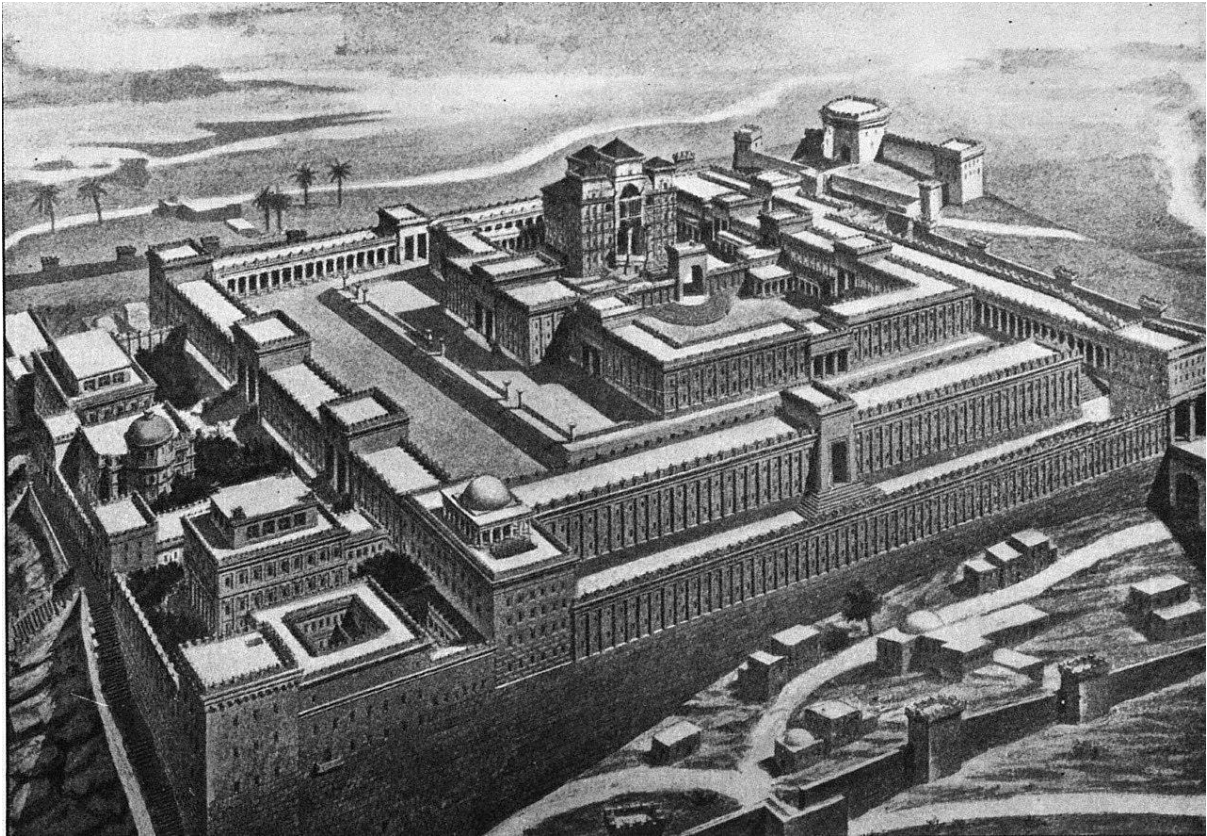


The Western Wall, also known as the Wailing Wall, Credit: Chabad.org



Temple Mount

Credit: The New York Times



Antiquated (1910) reconstruction of Solomon's Temple, based on the biblical text

Credit: alamy.com



The Holy land Model of Jerusalem Second Temple model, first created in 1966 and updated according to archaeological findings, Credit: wikipedia.org



Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem (David Roberts, 1850), Credit: Wikimedia.org



Previous page, earliest photograph of Jerusalem by Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (1844),  
Smithsonian website, si.edu



Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount)

Credit: planetware.com



The Haram al-Sharif is one of the most contentious pieces of land in the world, as well as being Jerusalem's most recognizable landmark.

For the Jewish faith, this marks the spot where the world was first created, and where it will end.

Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven from here.

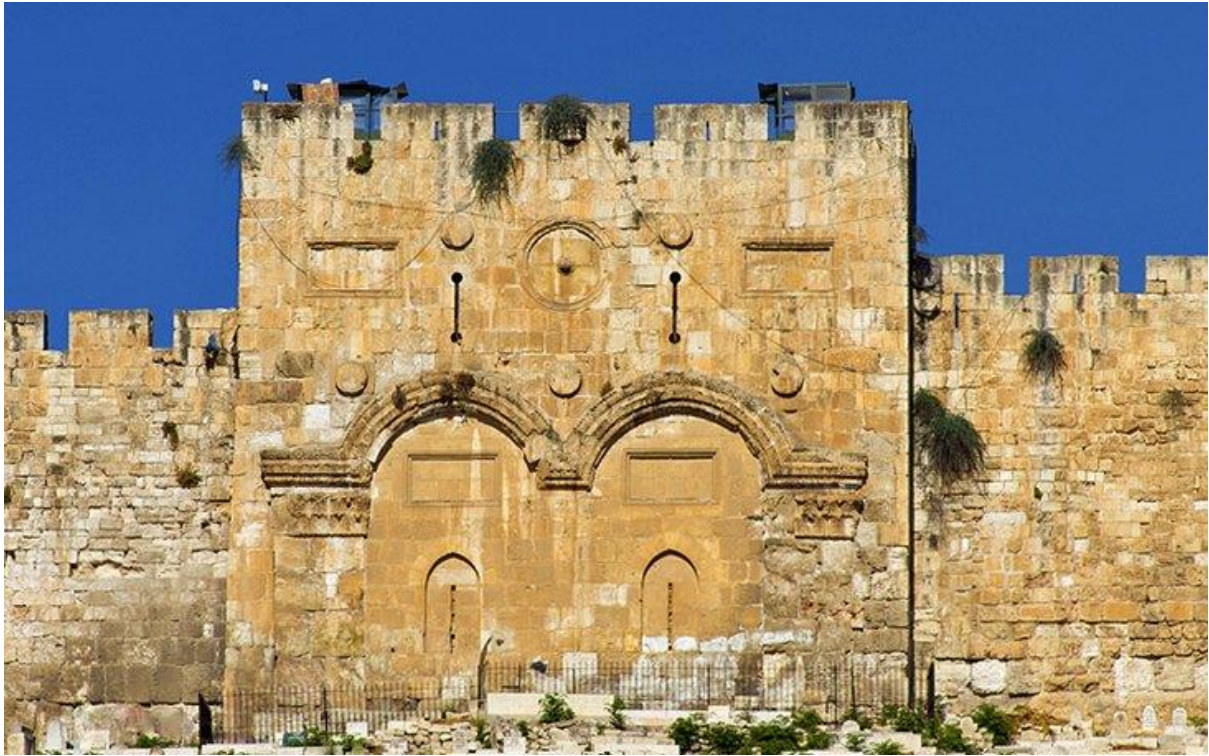
For all three monotheistic faiths (Jews, Christians, and Muslims), the Haram al-Sherif is the place where the Prophet Abraham stood ready to sacrifice his son to prove his faith to God.

First the site of the Israelites' First and Second Temples, and now home to the Dome of the Rock, this small plot of land (144000 sq. meters) has been fought over, across the centuries and the fight continues. Photos credit: planetware.com



The Enclosure Walls

The walls enclosing the Haram al-Sharif reach their highest point (65 meters) at the southeast corner, where there is a clear view of the massive blocks of dressed stone of the Herodian walls. There are seven gates leading up to the plaza, non-Muslims can only enter through Bab al-Magharibeh. The major gate entrances are the Chain Gate (Bab es-Silsileh); the Cotton Merchants' Gate (Bab al-Qattanin), the Iron Gate (Bab el-Hadid); and the Watchman's Gate (Bab en-Nazir).



The bricked-up Golden Gate, according to the Jewish belief, the Messiah will enter the city on the day of the last judgement through this double gateway.



The Temple Platform - The site of Solomon's First Temple



The steps leading up to the Dome of the Rock. The arches are called 'Scales' as it is believed in Islam that they will be used to weigh the souls of men on the Day of Judgement.



Al-Aqsa (The Farthest) Mosque where Muslims believe Muhammad ascended to heaven

Al-Aqsa Mosque (The Farthest Mosque) takes its name from Muhammad's journey to from Mecca to the farthest mosque before ascending to heaven. Some archaeologists believe that the mosque stands on the site of the Jewish Temple Mount. The original mosque was built during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph Al-Walid I (AD 705-715) and some archaeologists believe that it was constructed over a Byzantine-era Basilica. When the Crusaders arrived in Jerusalem, they also decided that the mosque was the true site of the Solomon's Temple.



The Dome of the Chain on Temple Mount

On the Dome of the Rock's eastern side stands the Dome of the Chain, where Solomon is said to have hung a chain over his father's place of judgement; a link would fall if any man appearing for judgement swore a false oath. The Dome of the Rock is built over the site where Jews believe Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac and Muslims believe Muhammad began his ascent to heaven. It was built by Abd al-Malik (685-705), the fifth Umayyad Caliph. The octagonal structure, with a high dome, enshrines the rock of Moriah. In the center of the inner rotunda is Es-Sakhra, the Holy Rock, over which the Jews' altar for burnt offerings, some believe

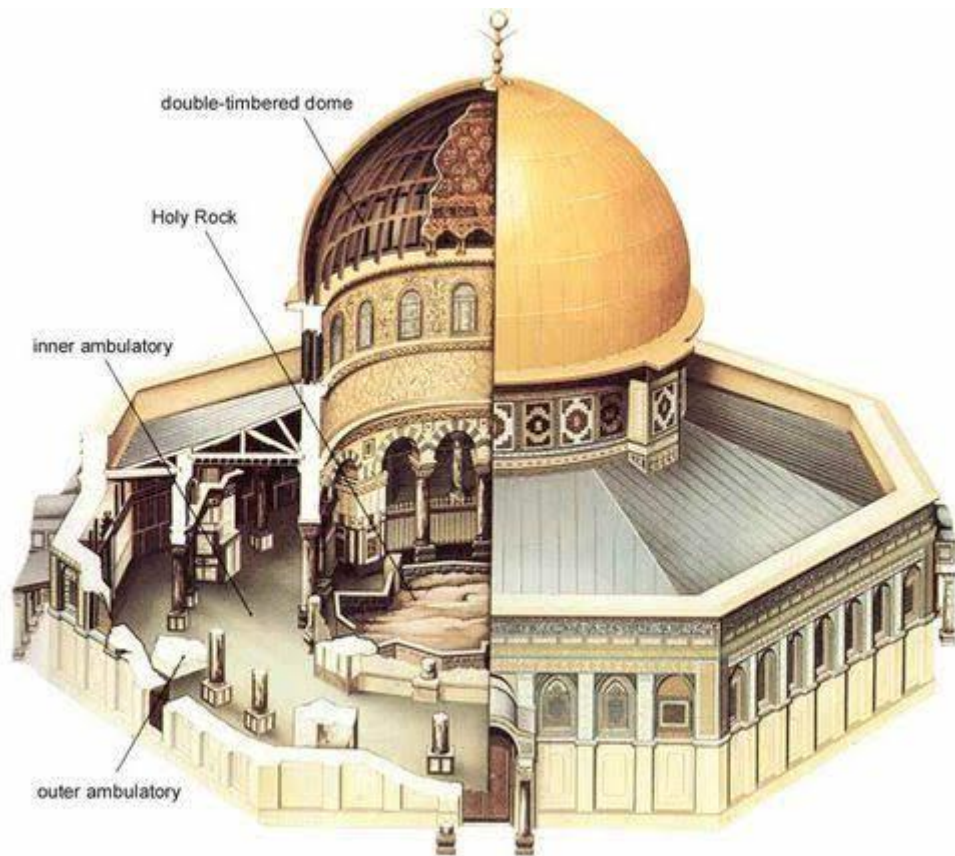
may have stood. Under the rock is a cave, known to Muslims as Bir al-Arwah ("Well of Souls"), where it is believed that the souls of the dead gather to pray.



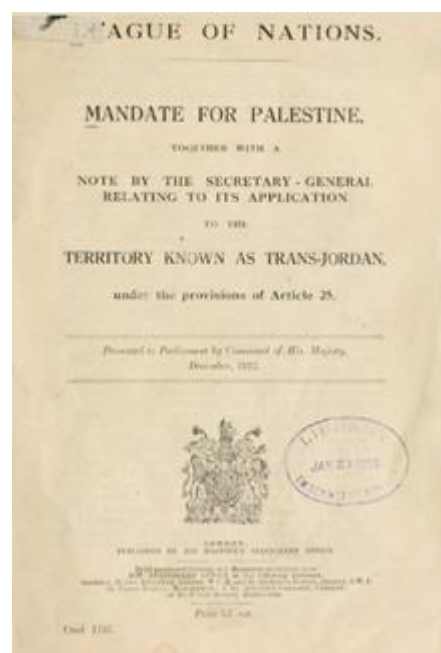
Dome of the Rock



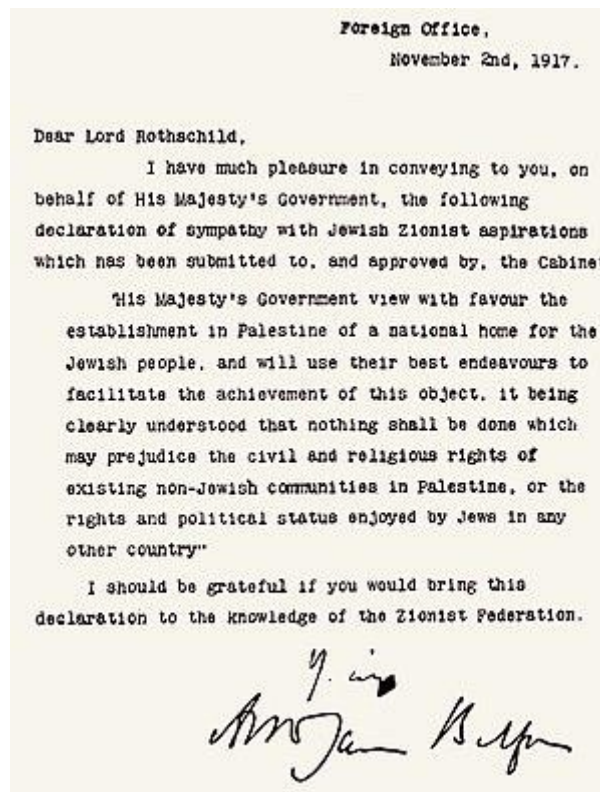
Dome of the Rock detail



The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where most Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead



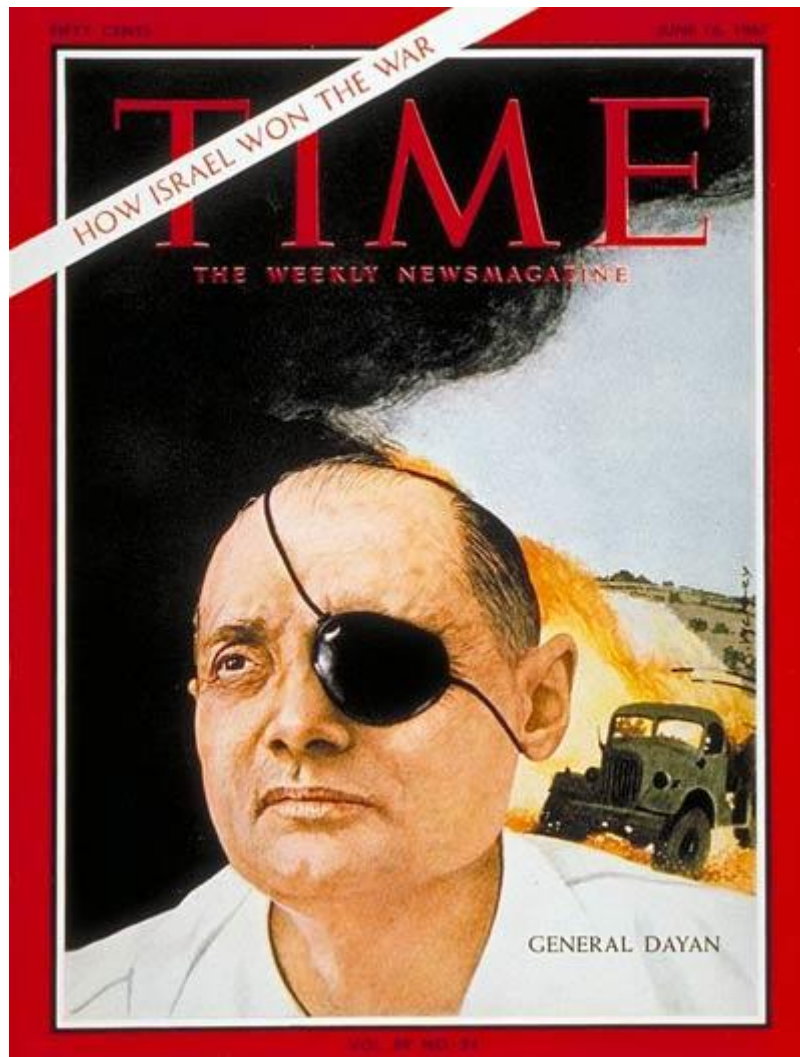
The Mandate for Palestine and the Transjordan, Credit: wikipedia.org



The Balfour Declaration, Credit: Wikipedia.org

Modern history of Jerusalem starts with the British mandate. The Mandate for Palestine was assigned to Britain by the San Remo conference in April 1920, Transjordan was added to the mandate later. British started to administer Palestine and Transjordan in July 1920 and April 1921, respectively and the mandate was in force from 29 September 1923 to 15 May 1948. In Palestine 'national home for the Jewish people' as envisaged in the Balfour Declaration was to be established alongside the Palestinian Arabs (who composed the vast majority of the local population). The British administered Palestine for almost three decades, through a succession of protests, riots and revolts between the Jewish and Palestinian Arab communities. Intercommunal conflicts resulted in the 1936–1939 Arab revolt and the 1944–1948 Jewish insurgency.

As the British Mandate for Palestine was expiring, the 1947 UN Partition Plan recommended 'the creation of a special international regime in the City of Jerusalem, constituting it as a *corpus separatum* under the administration of the UN.' However, this plan was not implemented, as the 1948 war erupted.



The war of 1948 resulted in the division of Jerusalem; the old walled city lay on the Jordanian side of the line. Jordan was thus able to take control of all the holy places therein. While Muslim holy sites were maintained and renovated, contrary to the terms of the armistice agreement, Jews were denied access to Jewish holy sites, many of which were destroyed or desecrated. Similarly, Jordan allowed very limited access to the Christian holy sites and restrictions were imposed on the Christian population which led many to leave the city. Of the 58 synagogues in the Old City, half were either razed or converted to stables and hen-houses over the course of the next 19 years, including the Hurva and the Tiferet Yisrael Synagogue. The 3,000-year-old Mount of Olives Jewish Cemetery was desecrated, with gravestones used to build roads, latrines and Jordanian army fortifications. 38,000 graves in the Jewish Cemetery were destroyed, and Jews were forbidden from being buried there. The Western Wall was transformed into an exclusive Muslim holy site associated with al-Buraq (a subterranean mosque next to the Western Wall, located in the southwest corner of the Al Aqsa compound in the Old City of Jerusalem).

Many other historic and religiously significant buildings were demolished and replaced by modern structures during the Jordanian occupation; the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque underwent major renovations.

During the 1948 war, the Jewish residents of Eastern Jerusalem were expelled by Jordan's Arab Legion. Jordan allowed Arab Palestinian refugees from the war to settle in the vacated Jewish Quarter. A no-man's land between East and West Jerusalem came into being in November 1948. Moshe Dayan, commander of the Israeli forces in Jerusalem, met with his Jordanian counterpart Abdullah el-Tell and marked out their respective positions: Israel's position in red and Jordan's in green. This rough map became the final line in the 1949 Armistice Agreements, which divided the city and left Mount Scopus as an Israeli exclave (portion of a territory separated by surrounding alien territory). Barbed wire and concrete barriers ran down the center of the city, despite that, military skirmishes were frequent.

On 5 December 1949, Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, proclaimed Jerusalem as Israel's 'eternal' and 'sacred' capital.

In 1967 Jordan, attacked Israeli-held West Jerusalem on the war's second day. After hand-to-hand fighting between Israeli and Jordanian soldiers on the Temple Mount, the Israel Defense Forces captured East Jerusalem, along with the entire West Bank. On 27 June 1967, three weeks after the war ended, in the reunification of Jerusalem, Israel extended its law and jurisdiction to East Jerusalem, including the city's Christian and Muslim holy sites, along with some nearby West Bank territory which comprised 28 Palestinian villages, incorporating it into the Jerusalem Municipality, avoiding using the term annexation. On 10 July, Foreign Minister Abba Eban explained it thus to the UN Secretary General: *"The term 'annexation' which was used by supporters of the vote is not accurate. The steps that were taken by Israel relate to the integration of Jerusalem in administrative and municipal areas, and served as a legal basis for the protection of the holy places of Jerusalem."*

Jewish and Christian access to the holy sites inside the old walled city was restored. Israel left the Temple Mount under the jurisdiction of an Islamic waqf, but opened the Western Wall to Jewish access. The Moroccan Quarter, which was located adjacent to the Western Wall, was evacuated and razed to make way for a plaza for those visiting the wall. On 18 April 1968, an expropriation order by the Israeli Ministry of Finance more than doubled the size of the Jewish Quarter.

In July 1980, Israel passed the Jerusalem Law as Basic Law. The law declared Jerusalem the 'complete and united' capital of Israel.

Jerusalem has been sacred to Judaism for roughly 3000 years, to Christianity for around 2000 years and to Islam for about 1400 years. Jerusalem city records show that there are 1204 synagogues, 158 churches, and 73 mosques within the city.

Jerusalem has been sacred to the Jews since King David proclaimed it his capital in the 10th century BCE. Jerusalem was the site of Solomon's Temple and the Second Temple. It is mentioned in the Bible 632 times. Today, the Western Wall, a remnant of the wall surrounding the Second Temple, is a Jewish holy site second only to the 'Holy of Holies' on the Temple Mount itself. Synagogues around the world are traditionally built with the Holy Ark facing Jerusalem, and Arks within Jerusalem face the Holy of Holies. Daily prayers are recited facing Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.

Christianity reveres Jerusalem for its Old Testament history and also for its significance in the life of Jesus. According to the New Testament, Jesus was brought to Jerusalem soon after his birth and later in his life cleansed the Second Temple. The Cenacle, believed to be the site of Jesus' Last Supper, is located on Mount Zion in the same building that houses the Tomb of King David. Another prominent Christian site in Jerusalem is Golgotha, the site of the crucifixion. The Gospel of John describes it as being located outside Jerusalem, but archaeological evidence suggests Golgotha is a short distance from the Old City walls, within the present-day confines of the city. The land occupied by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is considered one of the top candidates for Golgotha and thus has been a Christian pilgrimage site for the past 2000 years.



The Cenacle - Room of the Last Supper, Credit: wikipedia.org

Jerusalem is the third-holiest city in Sunni Islam. For a year, before it was moved to the Kaaba in Mecca, the qibla (direction of prayer) for Muslims was Jerusalem. The city's lasting place in Islam, however, is primarily due to Muhammad's Night of Ascension (c. CE 620). Muslims believe Muhammad was miraculously transported one night from Mecca to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, whereupon he ascended to the Heaven. The first verse in the Qur'an's Surat al-Isra notes the destination of Muhammad's journey as al-Aqsa (the farthest) mosque, in reference to its location in Jerusalem. The hadith, (the recorded sayings of Mohammad) also name Jerusalem as the location of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

\*

Andrew Lawler, a journalist and author of 'Under Jerusalem: The Buried History of the World's Most Contested City' has written a fascinating piece in the Politico magazine issue of 2 October 2021, titled, 'No Way Out: How the Opening of a Tunnel Blocked the Path to Peace in Jerusalem'. In it he traces the May 2021 riots to a dig on 23 September 1996 in the silent alley of Jerusalem's Via Dolorosa, deep in the Old City's Muslim Quarter.

Standing on the path that Christians believe Jesus trod on his way to execution, the men hammered away at a rock wall opposite a Franciscan monastery. Working quickly, they created an opening large enough to walk through. Mayor Ehud Olmert (who later would serve as Israel's prime minister), immediately reached the spot in the company of senior Israeli politicians, Jewish religious leaders and the television crews, told the crowd that the opening in the wall provided an answer to those who questioned the Jewish claim to the Holy City. The assembled dignitaries then chanted psalms in Hebrew in praise of Jerusalem.

One prominent spectator of the proceedings was the city's Grand Mufti, Ekrima Said Sabir. *"He pulled out his phone and called Arafat,"* recalled Yisrael Hasson, then the Jerusalem chief of Israel's security agency, Shin Bet, who later would direct the Israeli Antiquities Authority. *"He told Arafat that the Jews were digging under the Temple Mount."* When Sabir hung up, Hasson quickly dialed Arafat, whom he knew well. *"I said the tunnel does not go under the Temple Mount. But there was no talking to him."*

Less than an hour later, hundreds of Arab residents were marching through the streets of the Old City. After the noon Muslim prayers, the crowds swelled.

*"They started to shout from the minarets that Jews were penetrating the Temple Mount,"* said Dan Bahat, the Israeli archaeologist who had overseen the work the night before. *"That was enough."* While the tunnel paralleled the ancient acropolis, rather than running directly beneath it, its precise location was less important to Palestinians than the fact that Israelis had opened an exit to a Jewish sacred site in the heart of the Muslim Quarter.

Riots broke out within hours. Arafat, who had from the first insisted the Israeli decision was endangering the Haram al-Sharif's sanctity, called the move "*a big crime against our religion and our holy places*" and demanded that the United Nations Security Council intervene. Arab leaders around the world denounced the opening as a threat to Islam. Demonstrators took to the streets across the Arab world. "*The violence seemed to have a life of its own,*" recalled American diplomat Dennis Ross. Netanyahu came under intense criticism but staunchly defended his action.

"*Can we get Netanyahu to close the tunnel?*" asked Clinton, according to Ross's account. "*Probably not,*" the diplomat responded.

Netanyahu rebuffed the American president's calls for calm and requests to at least temporarily close the tunnel exit. "*I do not regret that we opened the Western Wall Tunnel, which has no effect on the Temple Mount and expresses our sovereignty over Jerusalem,*" the defiant Israeli leader said. In retaliation, Clinton ordered the United States to abstain rather than veto a United Nations Security Council vote that criticized Israel for igniting the conflict.

Four days of violence left 74 Palestinians and 16 Israeli soldiers dead, and more than 1,000 Palestinians and 58 Israelis wounded. The crisis was enough to prod Netanyahu and Arafat to take part in an emergency meeting at the White House with the president and Jordan's King Hussein. In the short term, the talks produced an Israeli-Palestinian pact for the holy city of Hebron that optimists hoped would serve as a template for a Jerusalem agreement. But the fury stirred on both sides by the bloodshed made a final deal elusive as Clinton's final term ticked away.

Just before Christmas in 2000, with only three weeks left in office, the American president made a final desperate effort. Clinton proposed Palestinian sovereignty over the Noble Sanctuary and Israeli sovereignty over "the Western Wall and the Holy of Holies of which it is a part."

Ehud Barak, who had beaten Netanyahu to become Israel's prime minister and his cabinet proved open to a deal, but Arafat balked saying, agreeing to any such proposal would risk his assassination.

The talks collapsed and with the inauguration of George W. Bush and the election of conservative Ariel Sharon as Israel's prime minister soon after, the peace process ground to a halt. The Western Wall Tunnel went on to become one of Jerusalem's most popular tourist venues, and visitors today can conveniently exit on the Via Dolorosa. The site has become the second most popular for Jews to pray, even as archaeologists continue to explore its many passages and chambers.

Next page, an ultra-orthodox Jewish man walks the newly opened tunnel linking the Western Wall to the Via Dolorosa, deep in the Old City's Muslim Quarter, Credit: Politico magazine



Fareed Zakaria in his Washington Post column of May 21, 2021, said that the only way to solve the Israeli-Palestinian problem is “to give the Palestinians a state of their own”.

The two-state solution is the ‘least bad’ solution. Theoretically it is feasible. What hampers a breakthrough is a reluctance by both sides to accept the underlying two peoples/two territories logic to the ‘two-state solution.’ Palestinians since 1948 have been unwilling to unequivocally accept the ‘Jewish state’ and give up their claims to land and property lost in 1948, thus stressing their ‘right of return,’ with Hamas unwilling to give up their war on the Jewish state. At the same time, many Israelis demand that all of the West Bank be treated as historic Jewish territory and thus open to Israeli settlement.

There are too many non-negotiables on both sides for a meaningful dialogue.

The control of the Temple Mount is at the top of that list of non-negotiables for Israel. During the 2000 Camp David talks Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat debated, unsuccessfully, a compromise on control of the Temple Mount. Sharon was not prepared for such negotiations, *“This is the place that is most sacred to the Jewish people,”* he said. *“It is untenable that it not be under Israeli responsibility.”*

Israel knows it has a strong hand. As Mehdi Hasan, contributing writer for the New Statesman, pointed out on August 8, 2014, *“The inconvenient truth is that the collective punishment of the Palestinian people is a collective endeavor: led by Israel, enforced by Egypt and endorsed by Saudi Arabia”*.

The reality is that the Arab world has abandoned the Palestinians.

No Israeli leader would dare betray their ancestors, their oaths, their promises to the generations who have sacrificed everything to have a safe and peaceful home in the Promised Land.

For thousands of years, Jews in the Diaspora would leave a corner of their homes unpainted, to remind themselves that they were not home. They have always prayed in the direction of Jerusalem. They have known the geography of a land they might never see, often, far better than the country in which they lived. They recited prayers for weather, they yearned for rain, not for the harvests outside Vilnius or Paris or Fez, but for those in Israel, since they expected at some time to return.

The Jewish people, especially in Israel believe that although their Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed twice, it will be rebuilt a third time.

Hence their prayer, *“L'Shana Haba'ab B'Yerushalayim habnuyah”* (Next year in the rebuilt Jerusalem).

Christianity has the Vatican, Islam has Mecca. The Jews have the Wailing Wall.

They want to re-build their temple on the holiest site in Judaism, where the First and the Second temples were built.

They have waited for more than two thousand years.

They want to pray now.



Credit: 123rf.com



Credit:unsplash.com

\*

Afghanistan: Its past has buried its future!

*“When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains  
And the women come out to cut up what remains  
Jest roll to your rifle an' blow out your brains  
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.”*

Rudyard Kipling,  
The Young British Soldier  
1895

\*

*“You have watches, we have time.”*

Taliban commander to Canadian General Rick Hillier  
Kandahar  
2006

\*

## Afghanistan: Its past has buried its future!



Afghanistan is a poor country with a rich history. It is a history full of myths and legends. “Graveyard of Empires” is one such myth.

There have been more than 200 Empires in the history of man, since the dawn of civilization, 30-40 large and the rest insignificant footnotes. Many empires have passed through Afghanistan and some stayed behind to hostile reception and left before committing suicide.

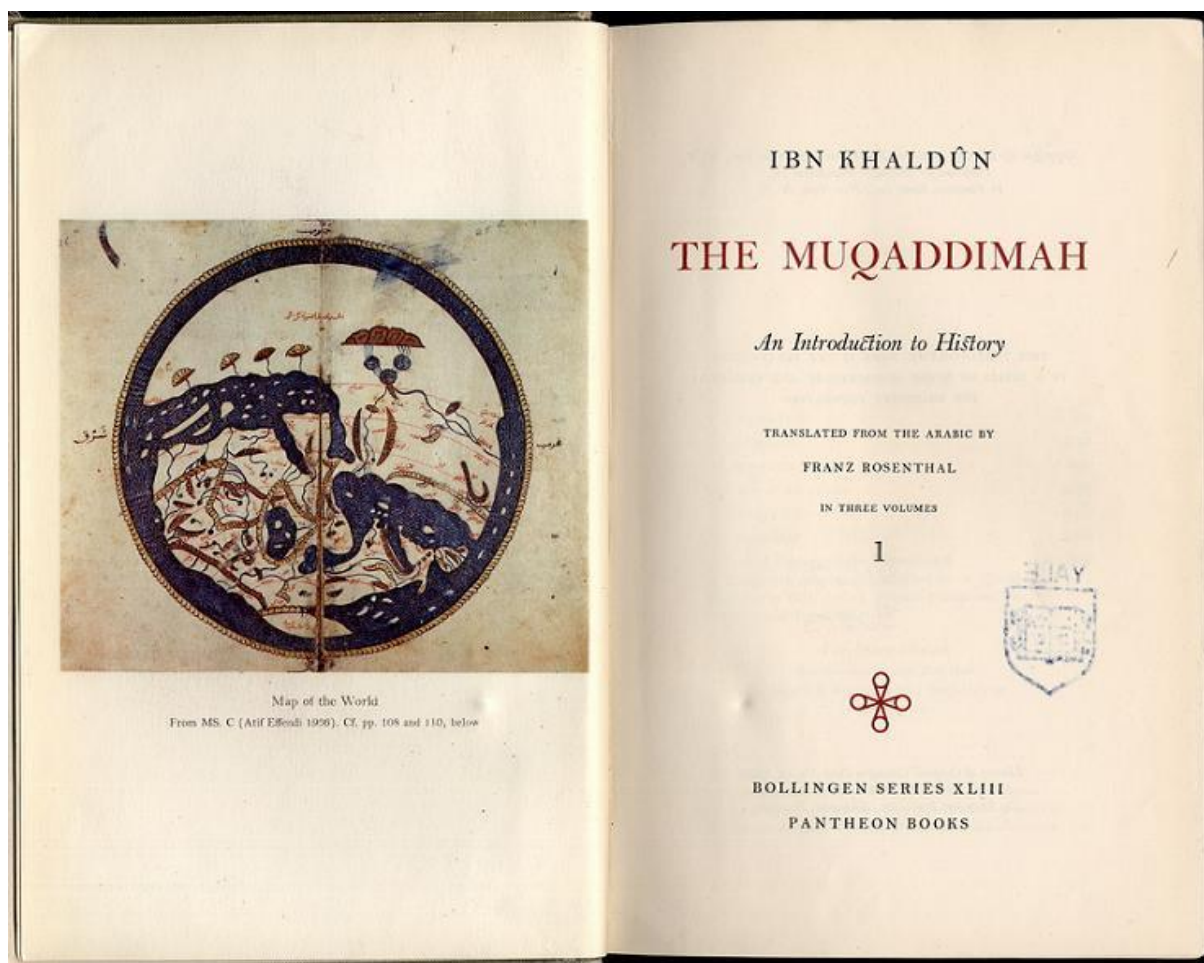
Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), the great historian, during a trip across Afghanistan in 1960, reflected that *"Afghanistan has been deluged with history and has been devastated by it"*. Toynbee argued that *"Civilizations die from suicide, not by murder."*

Toynbee admired the Tunisian historian Ibn Khaldun (1332 - 1406) for his book *Muqaddimah* ('Introduction to the History of the Universe' or *Prolegomena* in Greek). He observed that when a society becomes a great civilization, its high point is followed by decay which brings barbarians at the gates. Once the

barbarians have established themselves, they pursue refined life, become soft and are confronted by new, more aggressive barbarians.

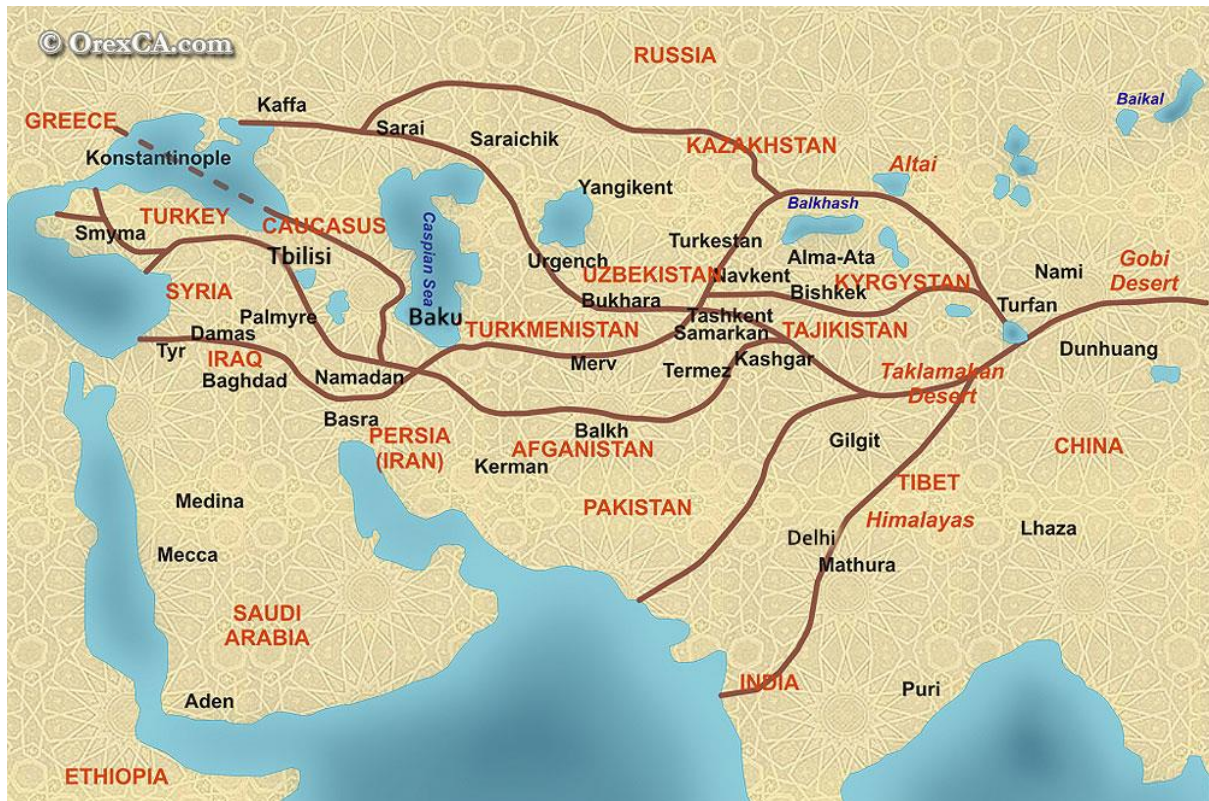


Ibn Khaldun, Credit: Medium.com



Credit: mullenbooks.com

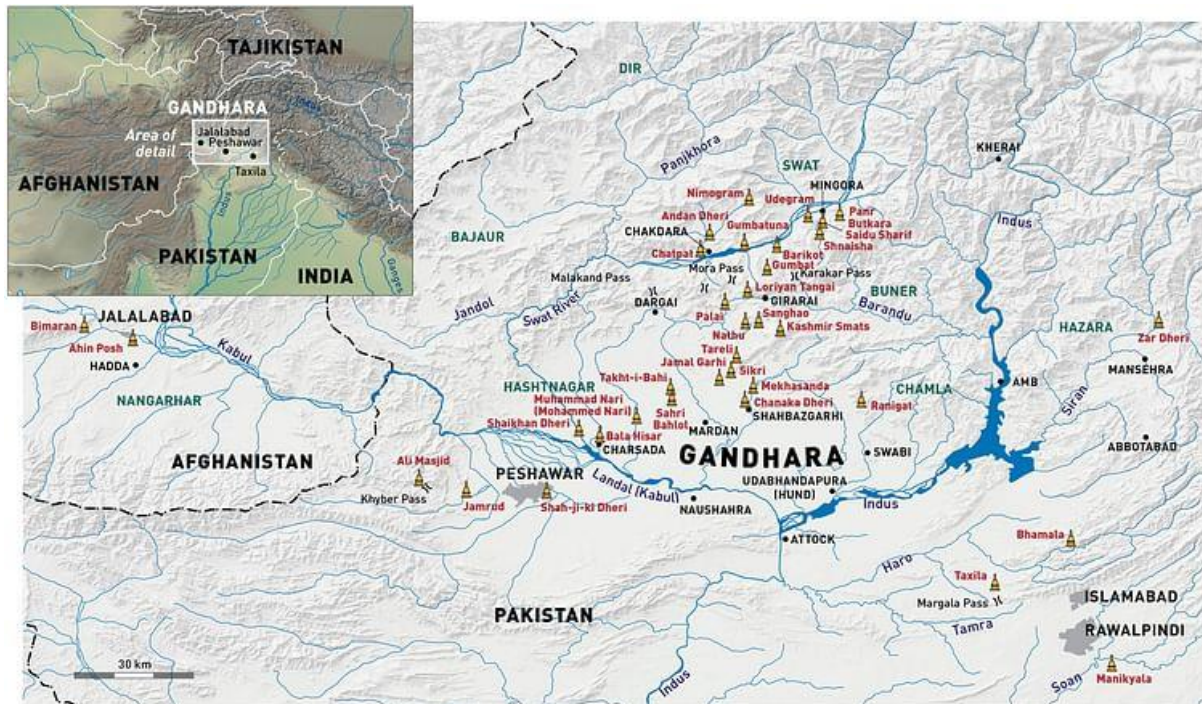
The 4000-mile Silk Road was a network of trade routes connecting the East with the West. From the 2nd century BCE to the 18th century CE, it was central to the economic, cultural, political and religious interactions, connecting East, South and Southeast Asia with Persia, the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa and Southern Europe.



The Gandhara civilization is the earliest recorded civilization finding reference in the Rig Veda, the oldest known Sanskrit text (1500-1000 BCE).

It is located in what is now Northern Pakistan and Afghanistan. Gandhara was described in detail by the Buddhist monk Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang, 602- 664 CE). He visited the region during the last phase of the civilization. Quoting ancient Buddhist sources, he described quite accurately the area and its sites including Takshashila (Taxila) and Purushapura (Peshawar).

The cultural hegemony of Gandhara extended to the Kabul valley and the province of Punjab. Indeed, its influence can be seen as far as in Sindh where remains of a stupa and Buddhist city are still visible, built over the even older remains of Mohenjo-daro.



Gandhara extending from Jalalabad in the West to Taxila in the East,  
with Peshawar at the center and Swat in the North

Gandhara witnessed the rule of several major powers of antiquity as listed here: Persian Achaemenid Empire (c. 600-400 BCE), Greeks of Macedon (c. 326-324 BCE), Mauryan Empire of Northern India (c. 324-185 BCE), Indo-Greeks of Bactria (c. 250-190 BCE), Scythians of Eastern Europe (c. 2nd century to 1st century BCE), Parthian Empire (c. 1st century BCE to 1st century CE), Kushans of Central Asia (c. 1st to 5th century CE), White Huns of Central Asia (c. 5th century CE) and Hindu Shahi of North India (c. 9th to 10th century CE).

Alexander is said to have crossed through Gandhara to enter into Punjab and he was offered alliance by the ruler of Taxila, the Raja Ombhi, against his enemy Raja Porus, who was a constant source of agitation for Taxila and its regions of influence. This culminated in the Battle of Hydaspes. Alexander's stay in India was short and he met his demise in Persia. Alexander left sizeable Greek populations in every region he conquered, and Gandhara was no exception.

Gandharan art can be traced as far back as the 1st century BCE and covered coins, pottery, painting, sculpture etc. It attained great heights during the Kushan era and especially under King Kanishka in the 1st century CE, who deified the Buddha and arguably introduced the Buddha image for the first time. Thousands of these images were produced and were scattered across every nook and cranny of the region ranging from handheld Buddhas to monumental statues at sacred sites of worship.

Indeed, it was during Kanishka's time that Buddhism saw its second revival after Ashoka. The life story of the Buddha became the staple subject matter for all aspects of Gandharan art, and the sheer number of exquisite Buddha images in stupas, and monasteries continue to be found in great numbers to this day. Even items of everyday use were replete with religious imagery.



Credit: metmuseum.org



Credit: cais-soas.com

Next page, The Seated Buddha, dating from 300 to 500 AD, was found near Jamal Garhi, and is now on display at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.



The Seated Buddha, (300 to 500 AD), on display at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.

Next page, statue of Standing Buddha, (1st–2nd century), Tokyo National Museum

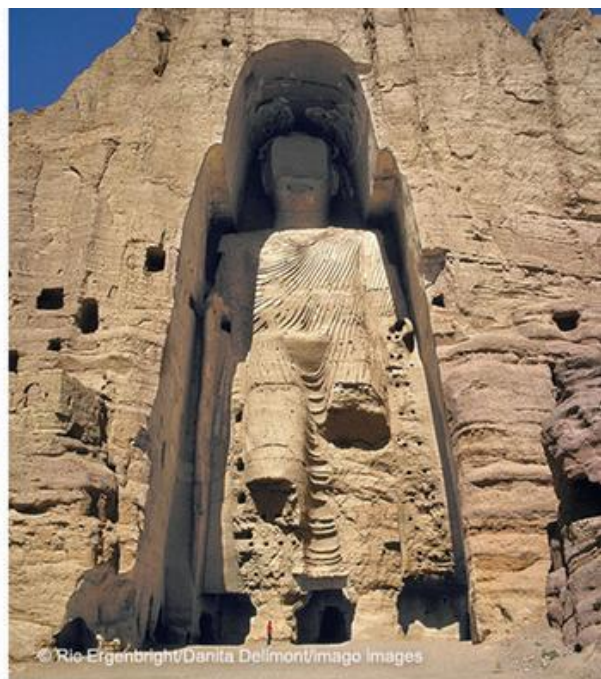
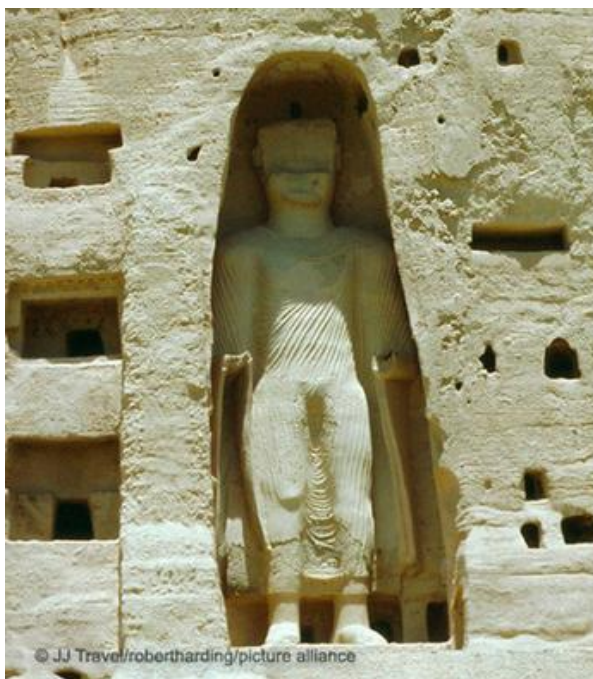


No discussion of the Gandhara art and its contribution to human civilization can be complete without reference to the two Bamiyan statues of Buddha.

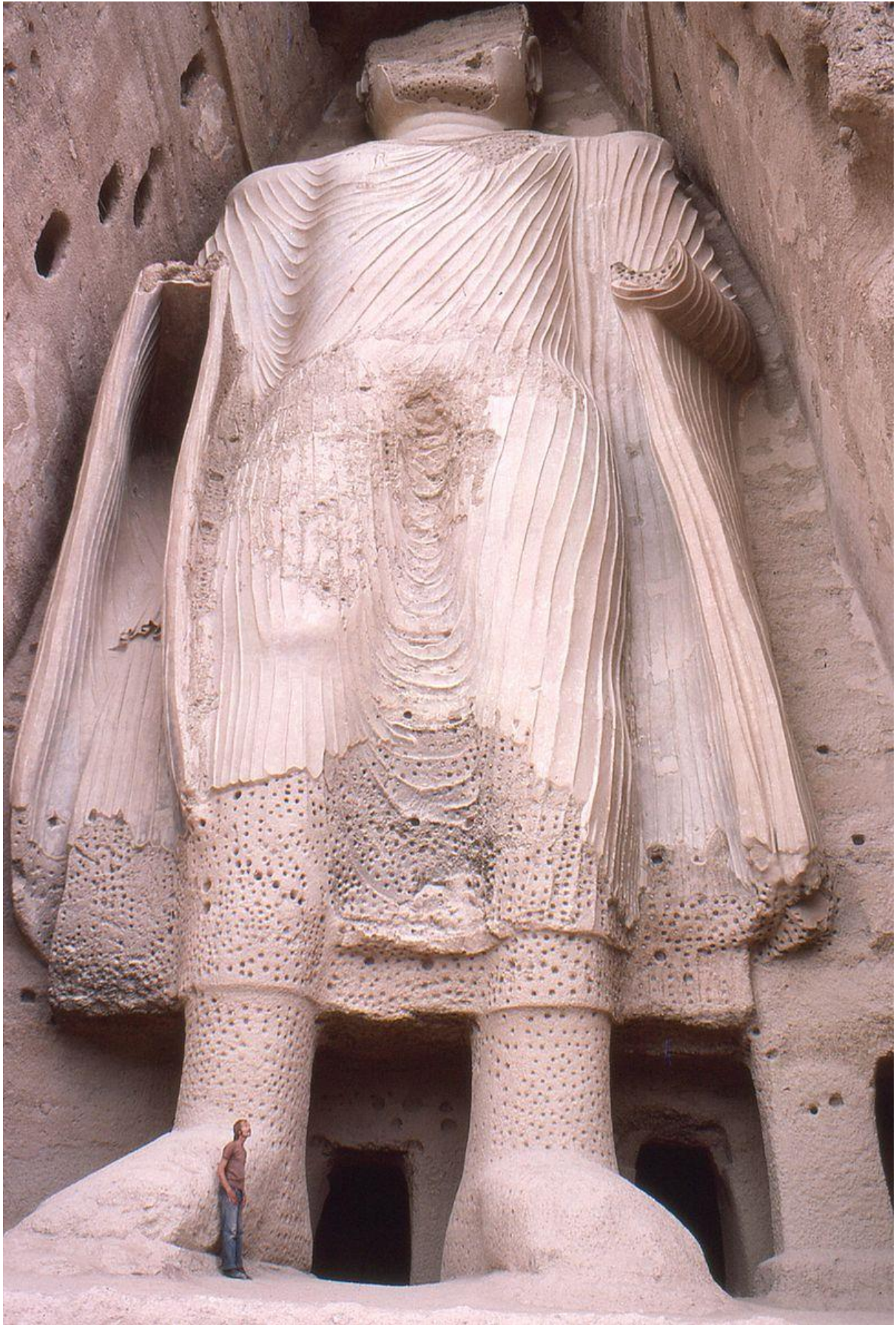
The Bamiyan Buddhas were two 6th-century monumental statues of *Vairochana* (Tibetan Vairotsana, primordial) Buddha and Gautama Buddha carved into the side of cliffs in the Bamiyan valley of central Afghanistan. Carbon dating of the structural components of the Buddhas has determined that the smaller (125 ft) 'Eastern Buddha' was built around 570 AD, and the larger (180 ft) 'Western Buddha' was built around 618 AD.



Alexander Burnes' drawing of the Buddhas of Bamiyan (1832), Credit: researchgate.net



Credit: wikipedia.org



Smaller (125 feet) Buddha in 1977, Credit: robertharding.com



Larger (180 ft) Buddha, Credit: nationalgeographic.com



The statues were blown up and destroyed in March 2001 by the Taliban, on Mulla Omar's orders

Credit: dawn.com

In the Mongol invasion of Khwarezmia, the Turkish-Persian Sunni empire (1219–1221), Genghis Khan invaded the region from the northeast. His armies killed thousands in the cities of Kabul, Kandahar, Jalalabad. After Genghis Khan returned to Mongolia, there was a rebellion which was quelled by his son Ogedei Khan, who killed all male residents of Ghazni and Helmand enslaving women.



Genghis Khan (1158 – 1227), Credit: nationalgeographic.com



Timur (1336-1405), Credit: amazon.ca

Timur conquered Afghanistan in 1383 and it became part of the Timurid Empire. Timur was from a Turko-Mongol tribe and although a Muslim, saw himself more as an heir of Genghis Khan, who definitely was not a Muslim. Timur's armies are estimated to have caused the deaths of almost 17 million people.



Tower of skulls, Credit: medium.com

According to El Mehdi El Azhary, *“To discourage its enemies, the Timurid army left behind the vestiges of its fury in the form of mountains of human bodies, heads having been used to build towers of men and clay. These are constructions in the shape of a tower or a pyramid, erected thanks to a skillful interweaving of decapitated heads mixed with mortar.”* It seems that Timur found this technique of dissuasion quite effective since from that time, quite systematically, Tamerlane left on his passage, along the roads or in front of the collapsed walls of conquered cities, what Jean-Paul Roux, the celebrated historian called “skull minarets.”

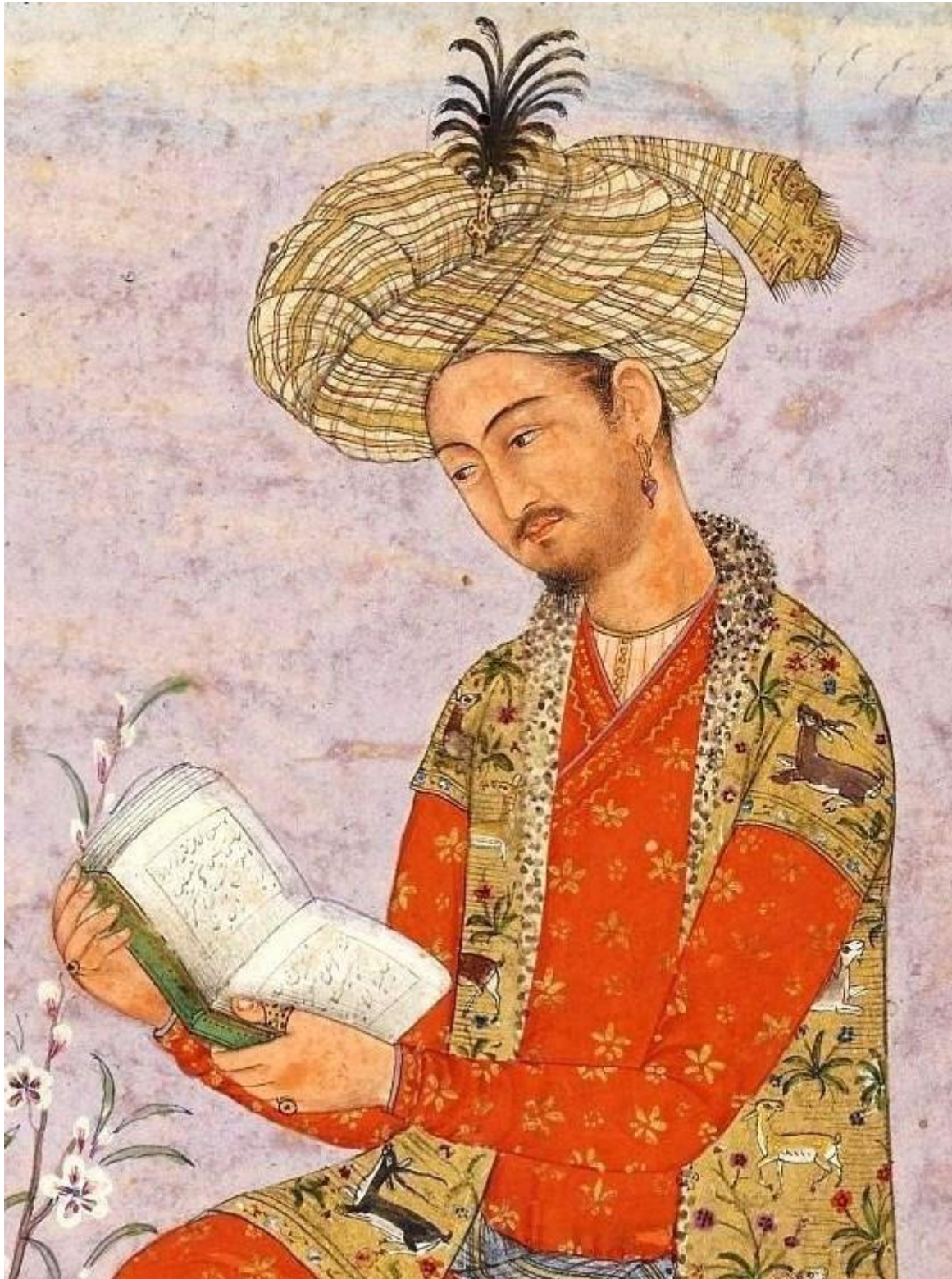


Timur, Credit: thediplomat.com



The first inscription on the tombstone says, “When I Rise from the Dead, The World Shall Tremble”, The second inscription says, “Whosoever disturbs My Tomb Will Unleash an Invader More Terrible than I”. Credit: pinterest.com

Babur (1483-1530), descendant of Genghis Khan and Timur, captured Kabul in 1504 and ruled it till 1526.



Babur

Credit: wikipedia.org

Ahmad Shāh Durrānī (1722 - 1773) was the founder of the Durrani Empire and is regarded as the founder of the modern state of Afghanistan. In July 1747, Ahmad Shah was appointed as the King of Afghanistan by a *loya jirga* in Kandahar, where he set up his capital. Within a few years, he extended his control from Khorasan in the west to Kashmir and North India in the east, and from the Amu Darya in the north to the Arabian Sea in the south.



Ahmad Shāh Durrānī, Credit: afghan-web.com



‘Coronation’ of Ahmad Khan Abdali (Sher-e Sorkh: Sheaf of wheat is being placed on Ahmad Shah’s turban) Drawing by Breshna, a contemporary Afghan artist, Credit: wikimedia.org

Ahmad Shāh Durrānī (1722-1772) founded Afghanistan. He became the King in July 1747 and made Kandahar his capital.

The Mughal empire was founded in 1526 by Babur, a chieftain from Uzbekistan, who employed matchlock guns and cast cannon from the Ottoman Empire and his superior strategy and cavalry to defeat the Sultan of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodhi, in the First Battle of Panipat. The Mughal imperial structure, however, is dated to 1600, to the rule of Akbar, which lasted until 1720, until shortly after the death of Aurangzeb. Reduced subsequently, during the East India Company rule in India, to the region in and around Old Delhi, the empire was formally dissolved by the British Raj after the Indian Rebellion of 1857.



Group portrait of Mughal rulers, from Babur to Aurangzeb,  
with the Mughal ancestor Timur seated in the middle.

Right: Shah Jahan, Akbar and Babur, with Abu Sa'id of Samarkand and Timur's son, Miran Shah.  
Left: Aurangzeb, Jahangir, Humayun and Timur's other sons Umar Shaykh, Muhammad Sultan.

Created c. 1707–12, Credit: wikipedia.org

Next page, Coins of Aurangzeb, minted in Kabul, dated 1691/2, Credit: wikipedia.org



### Timeline of Mughal Dynasty

S N	Ruler	Period
1	Babur	1526-1530
2	Humayun	1530-1540 1555-1556
3	Akbar	1556-1605
4	Jahangir	1605-1627
5	Shahryar	1627-1628
6	Shah Jahan	1628-1658
7	Aurangzeb	1658-1707
8	Muhammad Azam Shah	1707
9	Bahadur Shah I	1707-1712
10	Jahandar Shah	1712-1713
11	Farrukhsiyar	1713-1719
12	Rafi ud-Darajat	1719
13	Shah Jahan II	1719
14	Muhammad Shah II	1719-1748
15	Ahmad Shah Bahadur	1748-1754
16	Alamgir II	1754-1759
17	Shah Jahan III	1759-1760
18	Shah Alam II	1760-1806
19	Jahan Shah IV	1788
20	Akbar II	1806-1837
21	Bahadur Shah II	1837-1857

### Important battles fought during the Mughal Era

Battle	Year
First Battle of Panipat	1526
Mughal-Rajput Battles	1525-1750
Second Battle of Panipat	1556
Mughal-Maratha Battles	1680-1707
Plassey	1757
Third Battle of Panipat	1761



A portrait of Shivaji Maharaj

Credit: britishmuseum.org

The Maratha Empire dominated a large portion of the Indian subcontinent in the 18th century. The empire was established in 1674 with the coronation of Shivaji as the Chhatrapati and ended in 1818 with the defeat of Peshwa Bajirao II at the hands of the British East India Company. The Marathas ended the Mughal Rule over most of the Indian subcontinent.



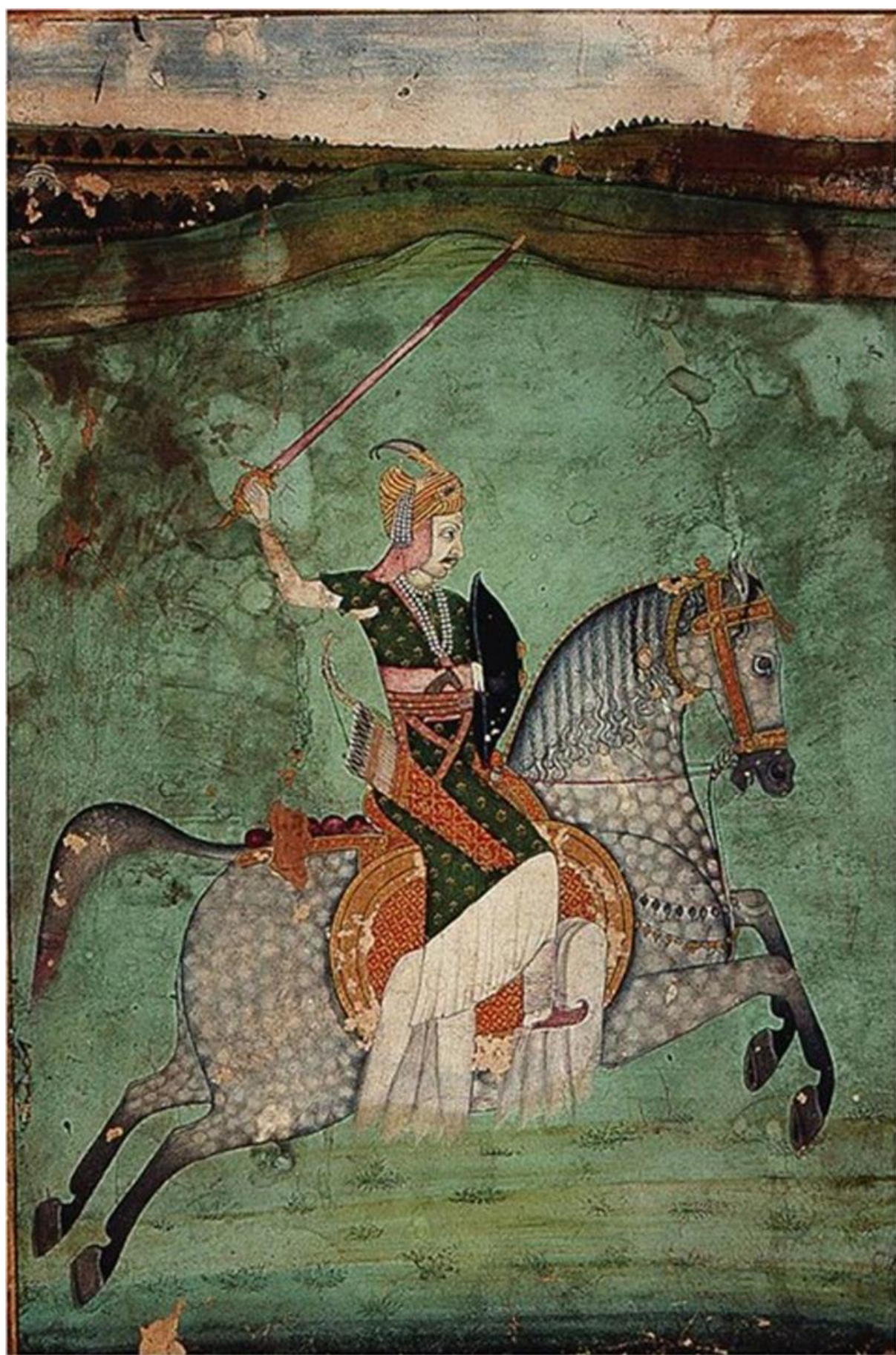
Gold coins minted during Shivaji's era, 17th century, Credit: facebook.com



A painted scroll depicting different types of ships of the Maratha Navy including some captured English ships. Credit: wikimedia.org

After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, Shahu, grandson of Shivaji, became the ruler and appointed Balaji Vishwanath and later his descendants, as the peshwas or prime ministers of the empire. Balaji and his descendants, especially, Bajirao I, played a key role in the expansion of Maratha rule. Bajirao compared the Mughals' declining fortune to a tree which, if attacked at its roots, would collapse. He is reported to have said: *“Let us strike at the trunk of the withering tree and the branches will fall off themselves. Listen but to my counsel and I shall plant the Maratha flag on the walls of Attock.”*

Next page, Bajirao I, Credit: wikipedia.org



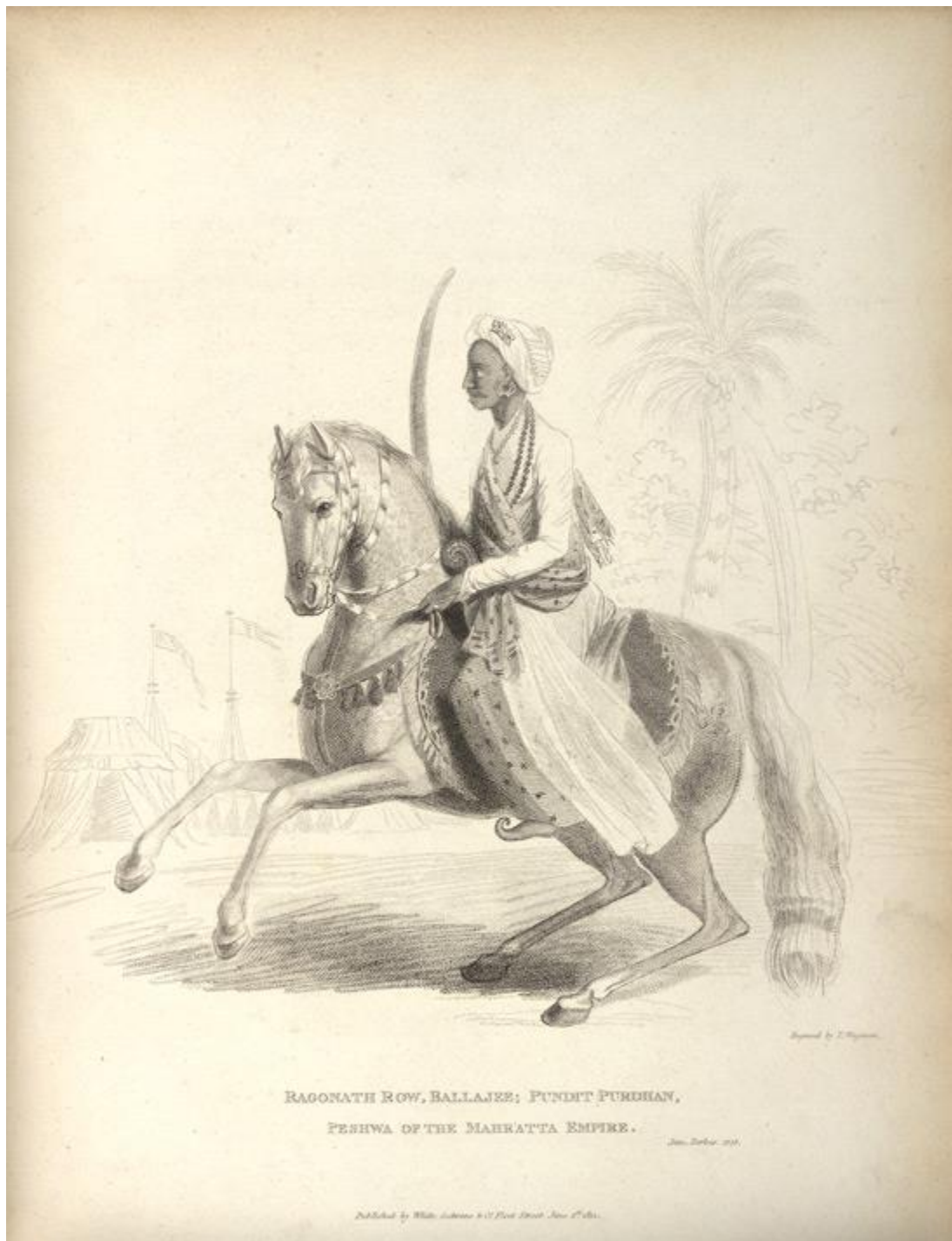
Bajirao fought over 41 battles and is reputed to never to have never lost even a single one. He was known for rapid tactical movements in battle, using cavalry. British field marshal Bernard Montgomery studied Bajirao's tactics in the Palkhed campaign and in his book, *A Concise History of Warfare* wrote, "*They (Marathas) were at their best in the eighteenth century, and the Palkhed campaign of 1727–28 in which Bajirao I out-generated Nizam-ul-Mulk, is a masterpiece of strategic mobility. Bajirao's army was a purely mounted force, armed only with sabre, lance, a bow in some units and a round shield. There was a spare horse for every two men. The Marathas moved unencumbered by artillery, baggage, or even handguns and defensive armour.*"

Jadunath Sarkar called Bajirao, "*a heavenly-born cavalry leader*". In his introduction to *Bajirao I: The Great Peshwa*, K. M. Panikkar wrote: "*Bajirao, the great Peshwa, was without doubt the most outstanding statesman and general India produced in the 18th century. If Shivaji was the founder of Maratha State, Bajirao could claim that he was the one who saved it from disruption and transformed it state into an Empire*".

Bajirao's successors, especially, Raghunath Rao and Madhavrao I were also great military leaders. Raghunath Rao captured Delhi in August 1757, defeating the Afghan garrison. This laid the foundation for the Maratha conquest of North-west India. In Lahore, as in Delhi, the Marathas were now major players. After the Battle of Attock in 1758, the Marathas captured Peshawar defeating the Afghan troops. The Marathas planned to abolish the Mughal empire and place Vishwasrao Peshwa on the throne in Delhi but were not able to do so because of the loss in the Third Battle of Panipat against Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1761, which halted their expansion into Afghanistan. Ten years after Panipat, the young Peshwa Madhavrao I reinstated Maratha authority over North India.

Peshwa Madhavrao I was the 9th Peshwa of the Maratha Empire. During his tenure, the Maratha empire recovered from the losses they suffered during the Third Battle of Panipat, a phenomenon known as Maratha Resurrection. He is considered one of the greatest Peshwas in Maratha history. Prof G. S. Chhabra in his *Advanced Study In The History Of Modern India* says, "*Young though he was, Madhav Rao had a cool and calculating head of a seasoned and experienced man. He was a genius who knew when and how to act and successfully crushed the formidable power of the Nizam. Hyder Ali, who was a terror even to the British, was effectually humbled and before he died in 1772, the Marathas were almost there in the north where they had been before Panipat. What could not have the Marathas achieved if Madhavrao had continued living just for a few years more? Destiny was not in favor of the Marathas and the death of Madhavrao was a greater blow than their defeat of Panipat and from that blow they could never again recover*".

Madhav Rao died in 1772, at the age of 27. His death was a fatal blow to the Maratha Empire and from that time, the Maratha power started to decline and was less of an empire than a confederacy.



Ragonath Row Ballajee; Pant Pradhan, Peshwa of the Mahratta Empire

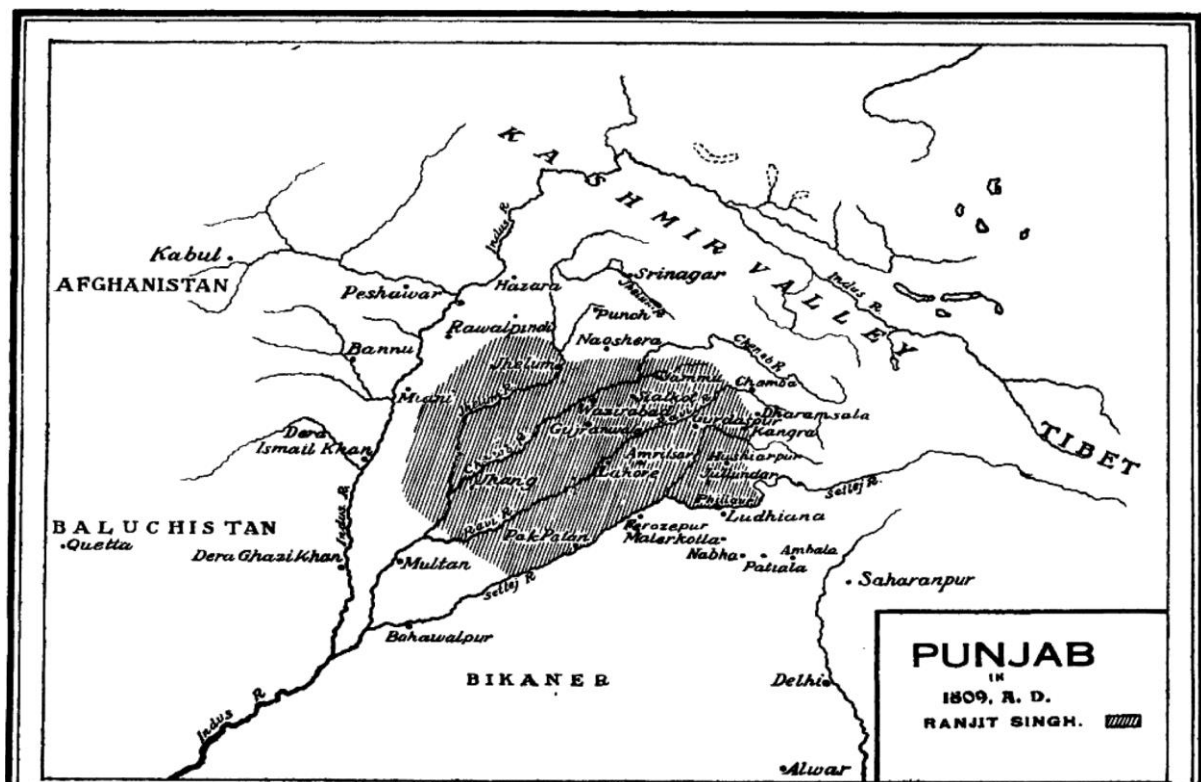
Artist: Forbes, James Medium: Engraving Date: 1813, Credit: wikimedia.org

The Maratha empire at its peak stretched from Tamil Nadu in the south, to Peshawar in the north, Orissa and western Bengal in the east. The Marathas remained the pre-eminent power in India until their defeat in the Second and Third Anglo-Maratha Wars (1805–1818), which resulted in the East India Company seizing control of most of the Indian subcontinent.



Portrait of Peshwa Madhavrao I by the artist Bhoj Raj, Credit: wikipedia.org

The Sikh Empire (1799-1849) was established by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, based in Punjab. At its peak in the 19th century, the Empire extended from the Khyber Pass in the west to Tibet in the east and from Mithankot in the south to Kashmir in the north.



The foundations of the Sikh Empire can be traced to as early as 1707, the year of Aurangzeb's death and the beginning of the downfall of the Mughal Empire. With the Mughals significantly weakened, the Sikh army, known as the Dal Khalsa, harassed them and the Afghans in the west.

The campaign for the empire began with the capture of Lahore, by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, from the Afghan ruler, Zaman Shah Durrani. Progressively, the Afghans were expelled from Punjab and Ranjit Singh was proclaimed Maharaja of Punjab on 12 April 1801, Sahib Singh Bedi, a descendant of Guru Nanak, conducting the coronation.

The Durrani Empire and the Sikh Empire fought a series of wars between 1751 and 1837.



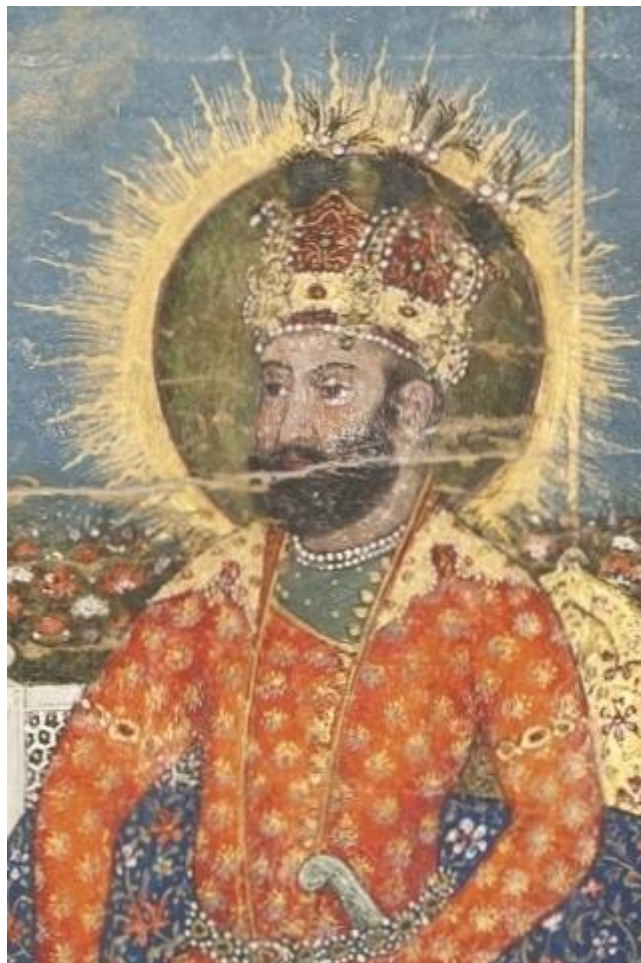
Timur Shah Durrani, Credit: wikipedia.org

### First Phase

In 1748, Ahmad Shah Durrani invaded and occupied Lahore, which was taken back and held by the Sikhs till 1752 when it was recaptured by Durrani. In 1758, the Sikhs again won Lahore, only to lose it to the Afghans in 1760's. recapturing Lahore back to Durrani rule, this victory was short-lived, however, as Sikh forces had forced Durrani armies to advance upon them, this would lead to the Battles of Sialkot in August 1761 and November 1763; in both battles the Afghans were defeated.

### Second Phase

On the death of his father Ahmad Shah, Timur Shah Durrani ascended to the throne in 1773. During his reign, he shifted the capital from Kandahar to Kabul due to intense displays of disloyalty and to appease the ethnic Tajiks. The move, however, angered Pashtuns, with the strife continuing even after his death in 1793. Timur Shah had twenty-four sons and in the violent succession struggle Zaman Shah Durrani prevailed, only to preside over the disintegration of the empire.



Zaman Shah Durrani, Credit: wikipedia.org

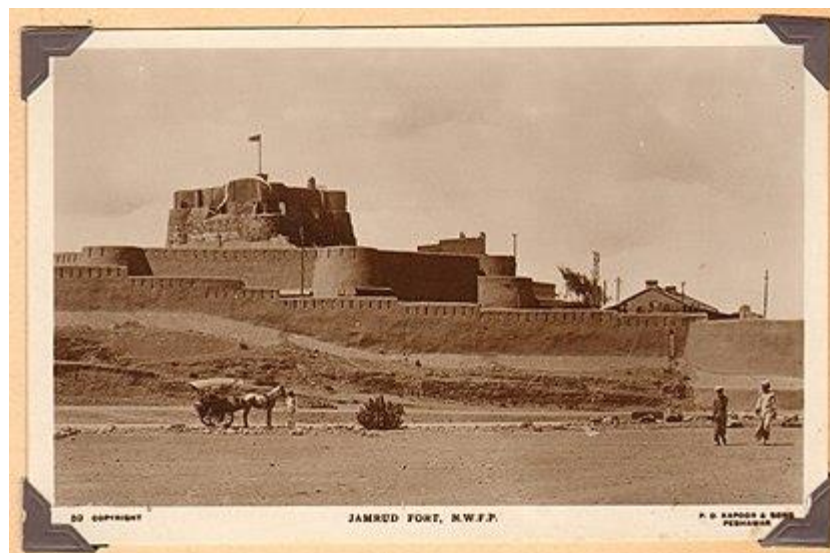
### Third Phase

On ascending the throne, Zaman Shah led multiple campaigns against the Sikhs. His first campaign was on November 1796, which led to capture of Lahore in January 1797, however this victory was short-lived, as he had to return home to combat his brother Mahmud Shah Durrani. The Sikhs recaptured Lahore after he left. Zaman Shah set out his next Punjab campaign in the spring of 1800; however, once again, he was forced to cut his campaign short, to deal with his troublesome brother, Mahmud Shah Durrani. That was the end of Zaman Shah and his Punjab campaigns.

### Fourth Phase

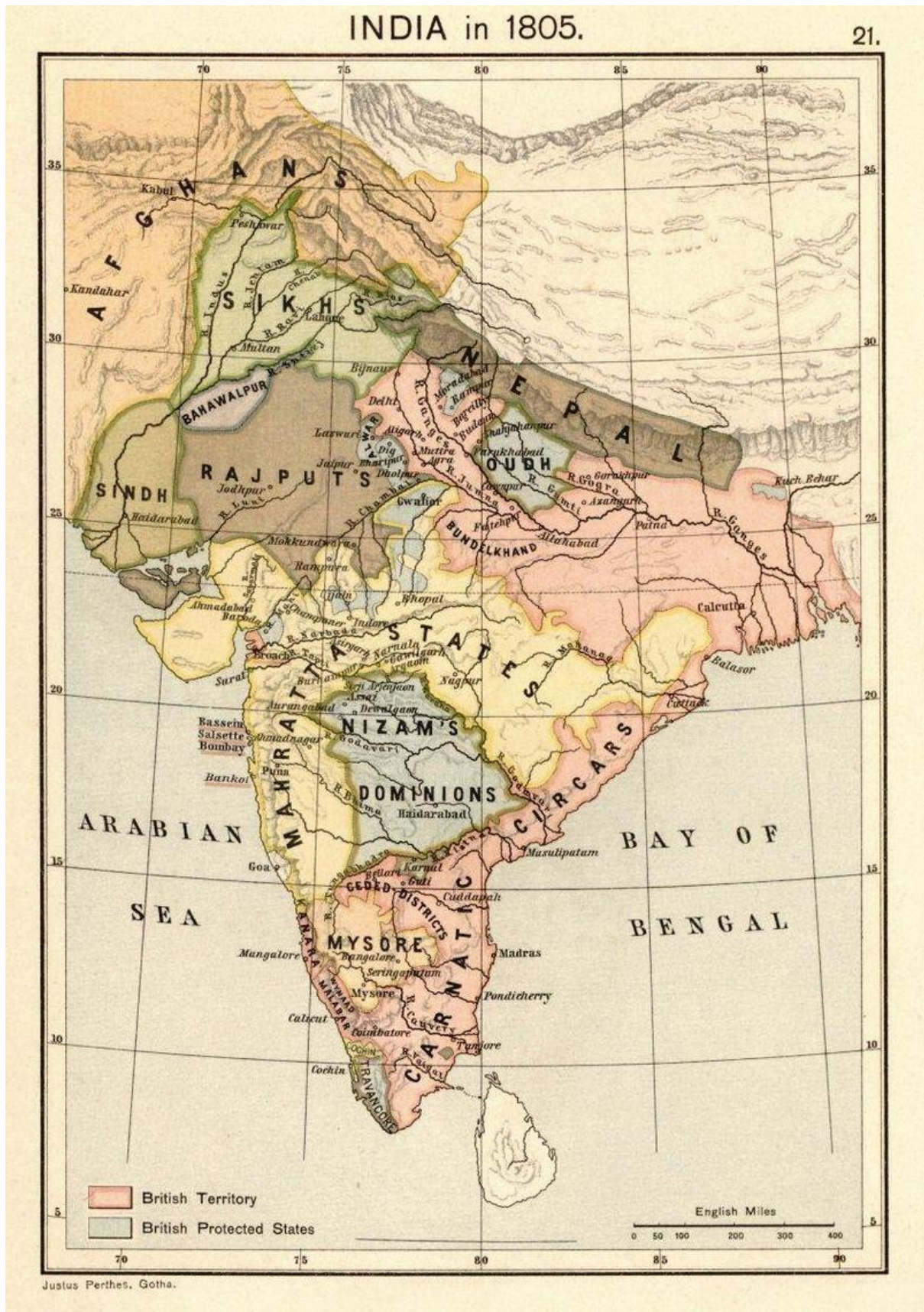
In 1813, the Prime Minister Wazir Fateh Khan besieged Attock, but due to the brilliant tactics adopted by Dewan Mokham Chand and Karam Chand Chahal the campaign the prolonged campaign resulted in abject failure with Fateh Khan running away to Kabul and the Sikh army capturing the Afghan camp, including the artillery pieces. The siege of Multan (1818) ended Afghan influence in the Peshawar region and the battle of Shopian (1819) resulted in the annexation of Kashmir. The capture of Kashmir extended the boundaries of the Sikh Empire up to Tibet.

### Fifth Phase



Credit: wikipedia.org

The Battle of Jamrud was the most controversial battle within the third Afghan–Sikh war. The result is disputed amongst historians: Some contend the failure of the Afghans to take the fort and the city of Peshawar or town of Jamrud as a victory for the Sikhs. On the other hand, some state that the killing of the famous Sikh commander Hari Singh Nalwa was tantamount to Afghan victory.



Next page, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Credit: wikipedia.org



## The Anglo-Afghan Wars



On October 1, 1838, Lord Auckland, the British Governor-General of India, issued the so-called Simla Manifesto, declaring war on Afghanistan. His *raison d'être* for the invasion was safeguarding the Indian empire from threats emanating from Afghanistan and beyond. The British wanted to replace Dost Mohammad Khan, the ruler of Kabul province and its principalities, with a compliant monarch: Shah Shuja Durrani, who had been living in exile in India since 1809.

Afghanistan in 1838 was a fractured polity, where the central government authority was non-existent. Dost Mohammad Khan's authority was confined to Kabul, Ghazni and Jalalabad. In the north, the territories between the Hindu Kush and the Amu Darya were governed autonomously by local chieftains. In the west, Herat was ruled by Yar Mohammad Khan Alokozai. In the south, Kandahar was under the collective leadership of Dost Mohammad Khan's half-brothers. In the east, Peshawar (the Durrani Afghan Empire's former winter capital), had been under Sikh domination since the 1820s.

With no broad-based central authority present in Afghanistan to rally the Afghan tribes against the invaders, the British didn't encounter much resistance when entering Afghanistan and installing Shah Shuja on the Kabul throne in August 1839. That initial lack of resistance by the Afghans contributed to British optimism about subduing Afghanistan, which would be tested in two years' time, when Afghans would rise against the British.



Dost Mohammed Khan, Credit: facebook.com



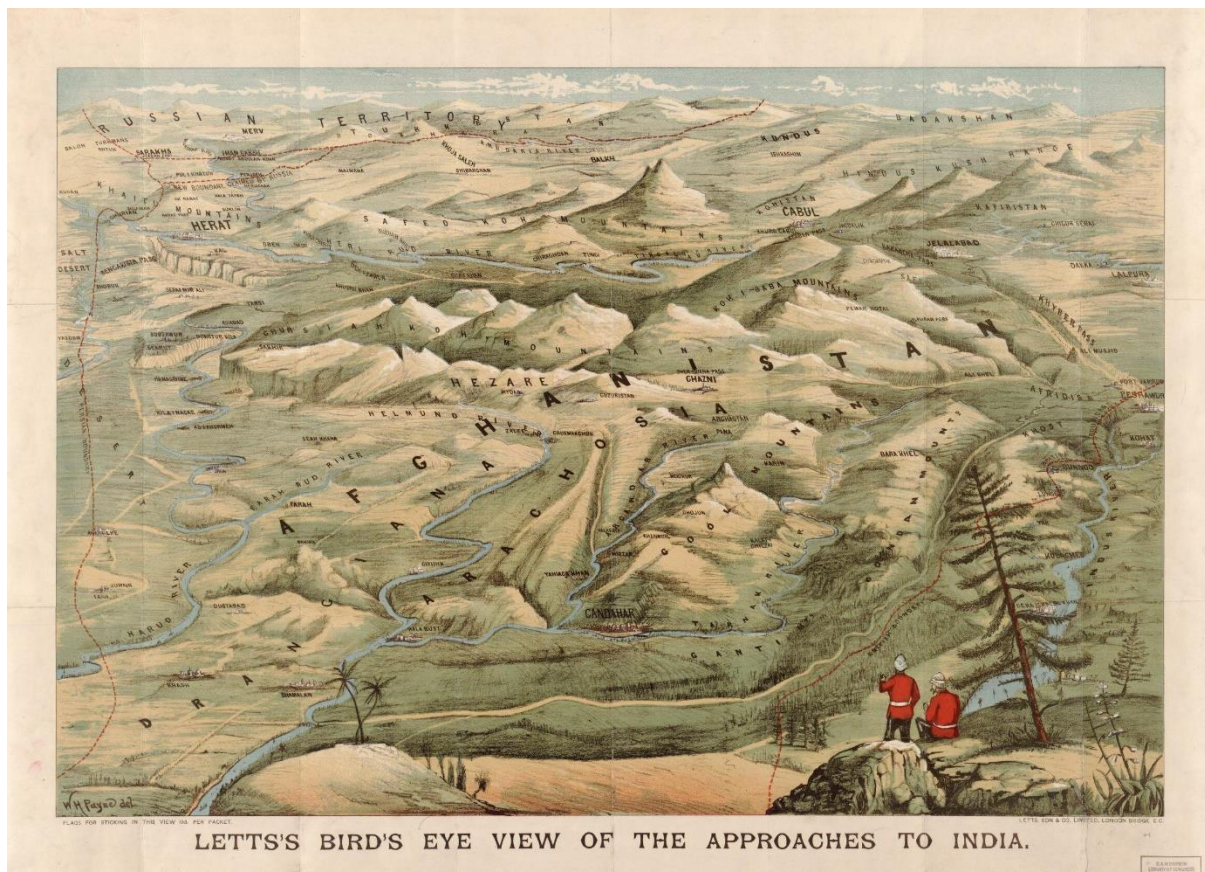
Shah Shuja, Credit: facebook.com

The term 'the Great Game' (the geo-political contest between the Tsarist Russia and the Victorian Britain for the control of Central Asia was used well before the 19th century and was associated with games of risk, such as cards and dice. The French equivalent *Le grand jeu* dates back to at least 1585 and is associated with meanings of risk, chance and deception.

"The Great Game," the geopolitical contest between Tsarist Russia and Victorian Britain for the control of Central Asia, is well known to scholars of Asian history and culture. Captain Arthur Conolly (1807-1842) of the 6th Bengal Native Light Cavalry, who initiated British reconnaissance and mapmaking in the region, published a popular version of his exploits in 1834 in which he coined the term. In

1837, Count Karl Vasilyevich Nesselrode, the Tsar's Foreign Minister from 1822 to 1856, created another descriptive term for this conflict, 'Tournament of Shadows.'

It was popularized by the British novelist Rudyard Kipling in his novel *Kim* (1901). It was then used academically by Professor H.W.C. Davis on 10 November 1926 in a presentation titled, 'The Great Game in Asia'. The use of the term 'The Great Game' to describe Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia became common after the Second World War.



The Great Game and the Boundaries of Afghanistan, Credit: wikimediacommons

With the exception of Emperor Paul who ordered an invasion of India in 1800 (which was cancelled after his assassination in 1801), no Russian tsar ever seriously considered invading India, but for most of the 19th century, Russia was viewed as 'the enemy' in Britain; and any Russian advance into Central Asia, into what is now Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan was always assumed in London to be directed towards the conquest of India, regardless of how far-fetched 'such an interpretation might be' as the American historian David Fromkin observed.



Lord Auckland (in office 4 March 1836 – 28 February 1842), Credit: wikipedia.org



Alexander 'Sekundar' Burnes, Credit: wikipedia.org

When Lord Auckland, the then Governor-General, learnt about the arrival of Russian envoy Count Jan Prosper Witkiewicz in Kabul in January 1836 to discuss trade opportunities with various Emirs, he was concerned. His advisers, especially, Alexander 'Sekundar' Burnes, the political officer in Afghanistan exaggerated the situation and talked about the possibility of Dost Mohammad turning to Russia for diplomatic support. Burnes described Witkiewicz thus, 'a gentlemanly and agreeable man, of about thirty years of age, speaks French, Turkish and Persian fluently and wears the uniform of an officer of the Cossacks'. Witkiewicz actually spoke English, German, Polish, Pashto, Kazakh and some Turkic languages, as

well and was considered a good negotiator. Dost Mohammad had invited Count Witkiewicz to Kabul to force the British into making an alliance with him against his archenemy Ranjit Singh, the Maharaja of the Punjab and not because he really wanted an alliance with Russia. The British could compel Ranjit Singh to return the former Afghan territories he had conquered, whereas the Russians could not, which explains why Dost Mohammad Khan wanted an alliance with the British.

On 20 January 1838, Lord Auckland sent an ultimatum to Dost Mohammad telling him: *"You must desist from all correspondence with Russia. You must never receive agents from them, or have anything to do with them without our sanction; you must dismiss Captain Witkiewicz with courtesy and you must surrender all claims to Peshawar"*. Burnes felt that Lord Auckland's letter was *"so dictatorial and supercilious as to indicate the writer's intention that it should give offense"*, and tried to avoid delivering it for long as possible. Dost Mohammad was indeed offended by the letter, but in order to avoid a war, he had his special military advisor, the American adventurer Josiah Harlan engage in talks with Burnes to see if some compromise could be arranged. Burnes had no power to negotiate anything, which led to Dost Mohammad to expel the British diplomatic mission on 26 April 1838.

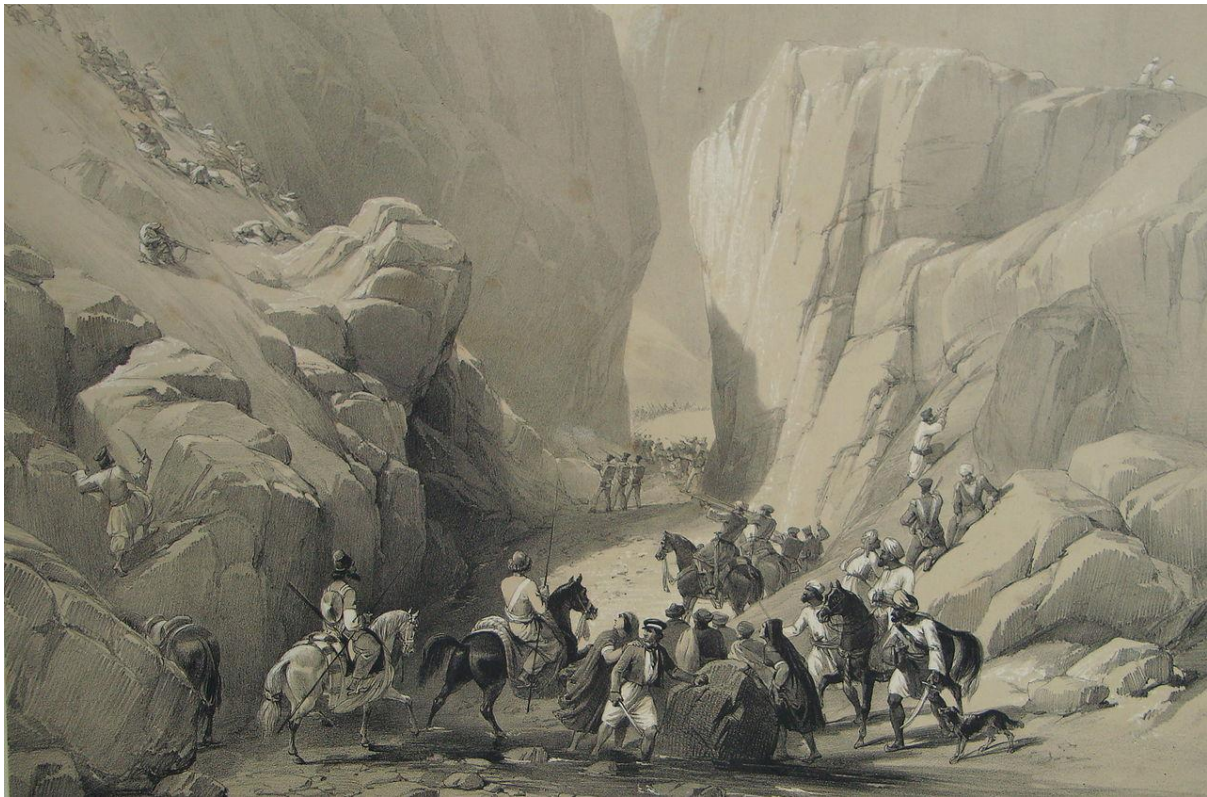


Count Jan Prosper Witkiewicz, Credit: wikipedia.org

In 1839, General Sir John Keane led a 20,000-strong British-Indian force, the Army of the Indus, through the Bolan and Khojak Passes. The terrain was difficult, and the British were harassed by tribesmen en route, but they encountered no major resistance.

The invasion force captured Kandahar without a fight after its ruler, the brother of Dost Mohammed, fled to Kabul as the army approached in April. Leaving a

garrison there under Major-General Sir William Nott, the main force then marched north-east towards Kabul.



The narrow pass above the Siri Bolan, Credit: bl.uk

After bribing many of Kandahar's tribal leaders, the British also organized a triumphant entry into the city for Shah Shuja.

The route to Kabul was blocked by Ghazni fort. This presented a major problem for the British as they lacked the heavy artillery needed to breach its thick 60-foot-high walls.

They only succeeded in storming it on 23 July 1839, after Mohan Lal - a Kashmiri interpreter, spy and assistant to the political officer Captain Sir Alexander Burnes - discovered that one of the gates was lightly defended.

In taking the fortress, the British lost 200 men. The Afghans lost nearly 500 men, another 1600 were taken prisoner.

Dost Mohammed fled from Kabul and Emir Shah Shuja was duly installed in August. However, the British could not afford to keep troops in Kabul indefinitely, plans were made to withdraw most of them.



Battle of Ghazni, Credit: wikipedia.org

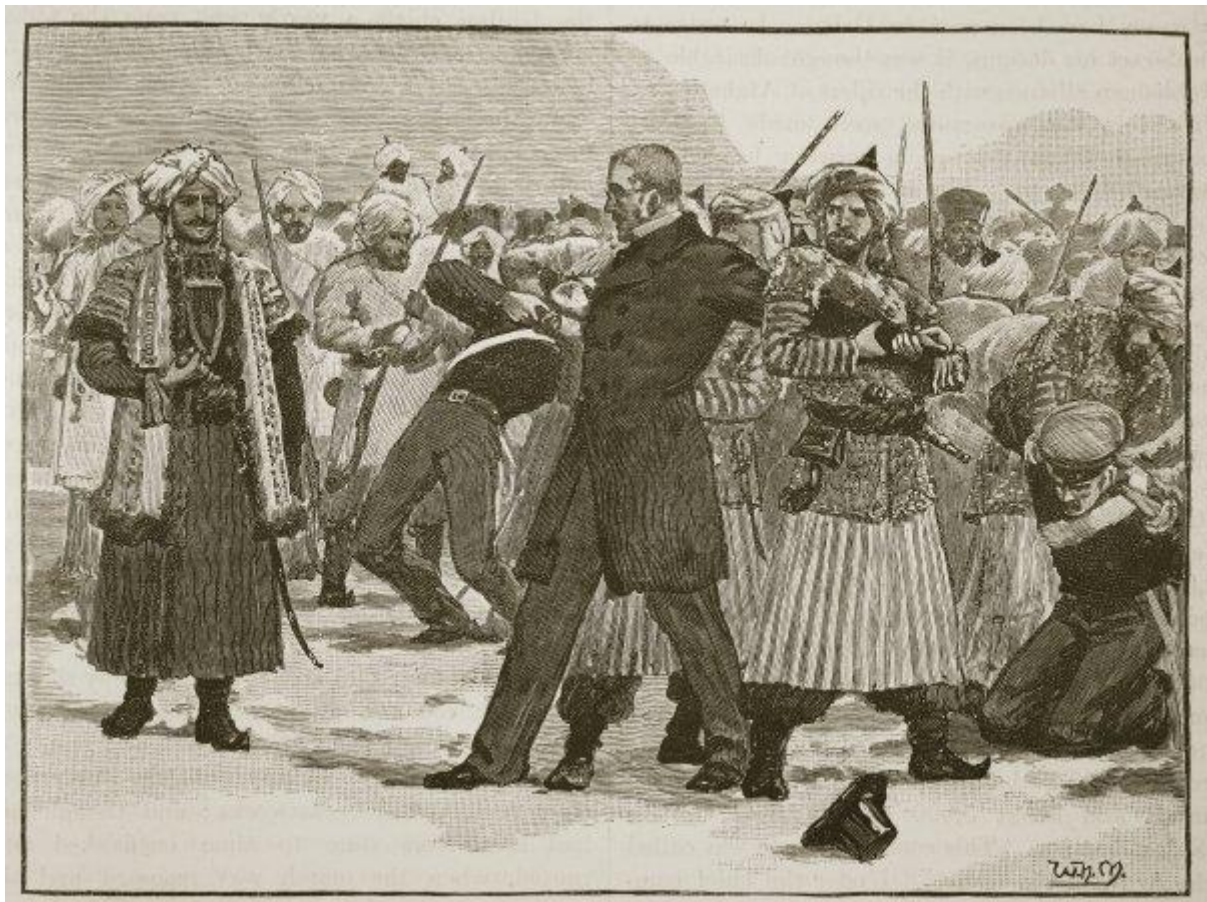
The Afghans resented the British presence and the rule of Shah Shuja. As the occupation dragged on, the East India Company's first political officer William Hay Macnaghten allowed his soldiers to bring their families to Afghanistan to improve morale; this further infuriated the Afghans, as it appeared the British were setting up a permanent occupation. Macnaghten purchased a mansion in Kabul, where he installed his wife who set about to making herself at home, with crystal chandelier, a fine selection of French wines, and hundreds of servants from India. Macnaghten, who had once been a judge in a small town in Ulster was known for his arrogant, imperious manner, and was simply called 'the Envoy' by both the Afghans and the British. The British officers staged horse races, played cricket and in winter ice skating over the frozen local ponds, which amused and astonished the Afghans who had never seen this before.

The resentment reached its peak when on the night of 1 November 1841, a group of Afghan chiefs decided to launch uprising the next day which was 17 Ramadan, the anniversary of the battle of Badr. (The Battle of Badr was fought on 13 March 624 CE (17 Ramadan, 2 AH), in Madinah Province in Saudi Arabia. Muhammad, commanding his army defeated the army of the Quraysh). The Jihad call was given from the 18th century blue domed Pul-i-Khisti mosque, the largest in Kabul.



William Hay Macnaghten, wikipedia.org

Akbar Khan initiated talks with Macnaghten who agreed. However, when he and an escort of British officers met the young Afghan prince outside the cantonment, they found Akbar waiting with a small band of warriors. As soon as the British dismounted to greet the Akbar Khan, Macnaghten was seized and murdered; along with several of the officers of his escort.



The murder of Macnaghten and his escort by Akbar Khan and his guards, Credit: wordpress.com



Akbar Khan, Credit: artstation.com



Lady Sale, Credit: wikipedia.org

Lady Sale, wife of Maj. Gen. Robert Henry Sale, a British army officer, dubbed ‘the Grenadier in Petticoats’ wrote in her diary on 2 November 1841: *"This morning early, all was in commotion in Kabul. The shops were plundered and the people all fighting."* The fighting, killing and looting continued unabated and Afghans stormed the poorly defended supply fort inside Kabul on 9 November.

Elphinstone had lost command of his troops already and his authority was badly damaged. On 1st January 1842, he signed an agreement for safe passage to India.

The departing British contingent of 16,500, had about 4,500 military personnel (consisting mostly of Indian units and one lone British battalion, 44th Regiment of

Foot), the rest being support staff, called camp followers. Lady Sale alone had 40 servants, none of whom she named in her diary!



Major-General William George Keith Elphinstone, Credit: collection.nam.ac.uk

On the first day, the retreating force made only five miles and as the night and the temperature fell, they learned that they had lost all of their supplies of food and their baggage. On the second day, all of the men of the Royal Afghan Army's 6th regiment deserted, heading back to Kabul. While trying to cross the Hindu Kush pass, the Anglo-Indian force was ambushed by the Ghilzai tribesmen and the British had to abandon all baggage while the camp followers regardless of sex and age were cut down with swords.

On 9 January 1842, Akbar sent out a messenger saying he was willing to take all of the British women as hostages, giving his word that they would not be harmed, and said that otherwise, his tribesmen would show no mercy and kill all the women and children. Lady Sale and the rest of British women and children accepted Akbar's offer of safe conduct back to Kabul. As the East India Company would not pay a ransom for Indian women and children, Akbar refused to accept them, and so the Indian women and children died with the rest of the force in the Hindu Kush. The camp followers captured by the Afghans were stripped of all their clothing and left to freeze to death in the snow. Lady Sale wrote that as she was taken back to Kabul she noticed: *"The road was covered with awful mangled bodies, all naked"*.

Almost all the evacuees were killed in ambushes, *en route*, in gruesome fashion. The only military man to reach Jalalabad was Dr. William Brydon, subject of the

famous painting by Lady Butler, etching forever, on the minds of the British, the image of Afghanistan as the graveyard of foreign armies.



'The Remnants of an Army', 1879, Photomechanical print, Credit: wikipedia.org

Lord Auckland had suffered a stroke and was replaced as governor-general by Lord Ellenborough in February 1842, who was under instructions to bring the war to an end following a change of government in Britain. Ellenborough ordered the forces at Kandahar and Jalalabad to leave Afghanistan after inflicting reprisals and securing the release of British prisoners.

In August 1842 General William Nott advanced from Kandahar, capturing Ghazni and partially demolishing the city's fortifications. Meanwhile, General George Pollock, who had taken command of a demoralized force in Peshawar used it to clear the Khyber Pass to arrive at Jalalabad, where General Sale had already lifted the siege. From Jalalabad, General Pollock inflicted a further crushing defeat on Akbar Khan. As the expedition advanced through Afghanistan, they bore witness to the countless dead comrades who had perished during the retreat from Kabul. This enraged the British who took revenge on Afghan civilians by razing villages, murdering men and raping women. Neville Bowles Chamberlain described the killings as "truly wicked." The combined British forces took Kabul in September. A month later, having rescued the prisoners and demolished the city's main bazaar as an act of revenge for the destruction of Elphinstone's column, they withdrew from Afghanistan through the Khyber Pass. Dost Muhammad was released and re-

established his authority in Kabul. He died on 9 June 1863. Dost Mohammad is reported to have said:

*“I have been struck by the magnitude of your resources, your ships, your arsenals, but I cannot understand why the rulers of such a vast and flourishing empire should have gone across the Indus to deprive me of my poor and barren country.”*



'Encampment of the Kandahar Army, under General Nott, outside Caubul', 1842, Credit: collection.nam.ac.uk

Many voices in Britain, from Lord Aberdeen to Benjamin Disraeli, had criticized the war as rash and insensate. The perceived threat from Russia was vastly exaggerated, given the distances, the almost impassable mountain barriers, and logistical problems that an invasion would have to solve.

In 1843 British army chaplain G.R. Gleig wrote a memoir of the disastrous First Anglo-Afghan War. He concluded that *“it was a war begun for no wise purpose, carried on with a strange mixture of rashness and timidity, brought to a close after suffering and disaster, without much glory attached either to the government which directed, or the great body of troops which waged it. Not one benefit, political or military, was acquired with this war. Our eventual evacuation of the country resembled the retreat of an army defeated”*.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War started in November 1878 and ended in September 1880. The war was fought to ensure that Afghanistan remained free from Russian interference.

Throughout the 19th century, the British Government was convinced that Russian influence over Central Asia constituted a real threat to its Indian domain. This core belief remained entrenched, despite the disastrous consequences of the First War.

In 1876, the Emir of Afghanistan, Sher Ali, was visited by a Russian diplomatic mission. When he then refused to accept a similar British mission the Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, decided to act.



Emir Sher Ali Khan, 1878, Credit: wikipedia.org

In September 1878, Lytton ordered a diplomatic mission to set out for Kabul, where he hoped to establish a political resident. This was a cost-effective way for British India to control the foreign relations of 'buffer' states. When the mission was turned back at the eastern end of the Khyber Pass, the British decided to replace Sher Ali.

In November 1878, three British columns, consisting of 40,000 men, invaded Afghanistan. One column marched through the Bolan Pass and seized Kandahar, a second occupied Ali Masjid fortress to secure the Khyber Pass before advancing to Jalalabad, while the third advanced along the Kurram Valley towards Kabul.

The third column, under Major-General Sir Frederick Roberts, found its way blocked at Peiwar Kotal by an Afghan force of 18,000 men and 11 guns. Roberts made a feint attack on the position, but led the 5th Gurkha Rifles and other troops

in a night flanking movement that dislodged the Afghans. The British-Indian force inflicted heavy casualties and captured all the Afghan guns.



Major-General Sir Frederick Roberts, Credit: wikipedia.org

The third column, under Major-General Sir Frederick Roberts, found its way blocked at Peiwar Kotal by an Afghan force of 18,000 men and 11 guns. Roberts made a feint attack on the position, but led the 5th Gurkha Rifles and other troops in a night flanking movement that dislodged the Afghans. The British-Indian force inflicted heavy casualties and captured all the Afghan guns.



Yakub Khan, Credit: rct.uk/collection

Sher Ali fled from Kabul, only to die of a heart attack soon thereafter. He was succeeded as emir by his son, Yakub Khan, who signed the Treaty of Gandamak in May 1879. In return for British support, he accepted the presence of a British envoy, Major Sir Louis Cavagnari, and British control of Afghan foreign affairs.



Major Sir Louis Cavagnari, Credit: collection.nam.ac.uk

Neither the new treaty nor the new emir was very popular in Afghanistan. In September 1879, mutinous Afghan soldiers from Herat appeared in Kabul demanding back-pay from the British. Cavagnari refused their request. Along with the rioting Kabulis, the soldiers attacked and set fire to the British Residency, killing its 200 occupants, including Cavagnari. Yakub Khan did not intervene.

When the news reached India, Roberts was recalled and given command of a new force. Its mission was to reach Kabul and identify those responsible for the attack. Suspected rebels were to be tried and, if found guilty, executed. Yakub Khan was to be either defeated or deposed.

Roberts' force was opposed by the Afghans at Charasiab, despite the fact that Yakub Khan had by then joined the British column. Roberts defeated the Afghan force and reached Kabul in October. Trials and executions began, but supporters of Yakub Khan and opponents of British occupation rose in revolt.

Just before Christmas, around 50,000 tribesmen attacked the 7,000-strong garrison. By dawn on Christmas Eve, the tribes had been dispersed. Roberts re-occupied Kabul.

In May 1880, Roberts was joined by Lieutenant-General Sir Donald Stewart, who had advanced from Kandahar and defeated the Afghan army at Ahmed Khel.

In July, the vacant throne was offered to Abdur Rahman, a nephew of Sher Ali, who agreed to abide by the terms of the Treaty of Gandamak.



Abdur Rahman, Credit: alchetron.com

However, trouble was brewing in Herat, where another son of Sher Ali, Ayub Khan, launched his own bid to become emir. On 27 July 1880, a 1,000-strong British-Indian force sent to intercept him was overwhelmed by an army ten times its size at Maiwand. The survivors were pursued back into Kandahar, which was soon besieged by Ayub Khan's victorious army.

In response, Roberts led a force out from Kabul to Kandahar. Despite the difficult terrain and oppressive heat, he covered over 300 miles in 20 days, hardly losing a man. On 1 September 1880, he defeated Ayub Khan outside Kandahar and ended the siege.

The British left Afghanistan in the hands of Abdur Rahman, who agreed to conduct his foreign policy through the Government of India. They also seized several Afghan districts in the Khyber and Kurram border areas. However, the provocative policy of maintaining a British resident in Kabul was quietly dropped. The last British and Indian soldiers left the country in April 1881.

The Third Afghan War began on 6 May 1919, when the Emirate of Afghanistan invaded British India and ended with armistice on 8 August 1919.

In February 1919, Amanullah Khan became the new Amir of Afghanistan. He immediately repudiated the Treaty of Gandamak, which had given the British control of Afghan foreign policy at the end of the Second Afghan War (1878-80).



Amanullah Khan, Credit: wikipedia.com

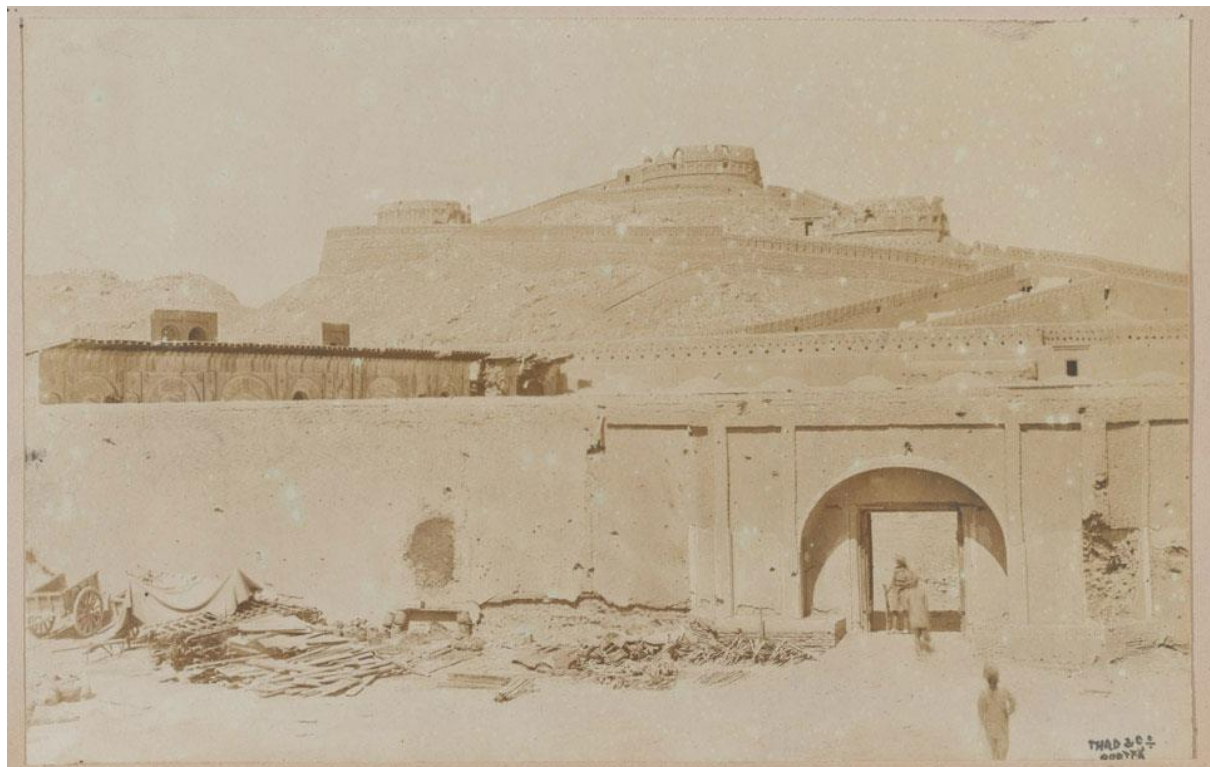
In the aftermath of the First World War (1914-18), Amanullah believed that the British and Indian troops would be too war-weary to resist. He also hoped to take advantage of ongoing nationalist unrest in India, which he himself had done much to encourage. Detachments of Afghan troops entered British India on 3 May 1919

Unnerved by Amanullah's alliance with the Bolshevik regime in Russia, Britain's traditional rival in the region and angered by his support for nationalist agitators, the British mobilized their army.

Although there was a shortage of men, artillery and machine guns, a British division from Peshawar quickly defeated a larger Afghan force that had occupied Bagh and attacked Landi Kotal at the western end of the Khyber Pass. They forced the Afghans back across the border towards Jalalabad, occupying Dakka on 13 May 1919. The Afghans launched an infantry assault, but by 17 May the British successfully secured the area.

Next page, Map of Afghanistan and the North West Frontier, 1919 and

Spin Baldak, 1919, Credit: collection.nam.ac.uk



On 27 May 1919, the British successfully stormed the Afghan fortress of Spin Baldak in southern Baluchistan. The fort guarded the strategically vital road from Kandahar to Quetta. Its capture reduced the chance of an Afghan invasion by that route. Over 200 of its 500-strong garrison of Afghan regulars, many of whom were armed only with single shot rifles, were killed in the action.

The largest Afghan attack took place in the Tochi-Kurram valley area. The situation became critical when the militia in Waziristan mutinied against the British. Major Guy Hamilton Russell, commander of the South Waziristan Militia, lost many troops while withdrawing from Wana to Fort Sandeman end May 1919.

Meanwhile, the garrison at Thal, which guarded the Kurram Pass, was soon cut off and besieged by a large Afghan force under the command of Nadir Khan. The garrison, consisting of four under-strength battalions of Sikhs and Gurkhas and a squadron of cavalry, held out for a week until relieved by a column from Peshawar under the notorious Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer of Jalianwala Bagh massacre.

Airpower played a key role during the war. Five Royal Air Force squadrons were used in bombing attacks on the rebellious tribes and on targets in Kabul and Jalalabad.

The attacks on Afghan towns forced King Amanullah to the negotiating table.

A ceasefire was agreed on 3 June 1919, without giving Afghanistan the right to conduct their own foreign affairs, which had been Amanullah's real goal.

For the British, the Durand Line, long a contentious issue between the two nations, was reaffirmed as the political boundary separating Afghanistan from the North West Frontier. The Afghans also agreed to stop interfering with the tribes on the British side of the line.

However, neither side was fully satisfied with the treaty and the amended treaty was signed on 22nd November 1921.

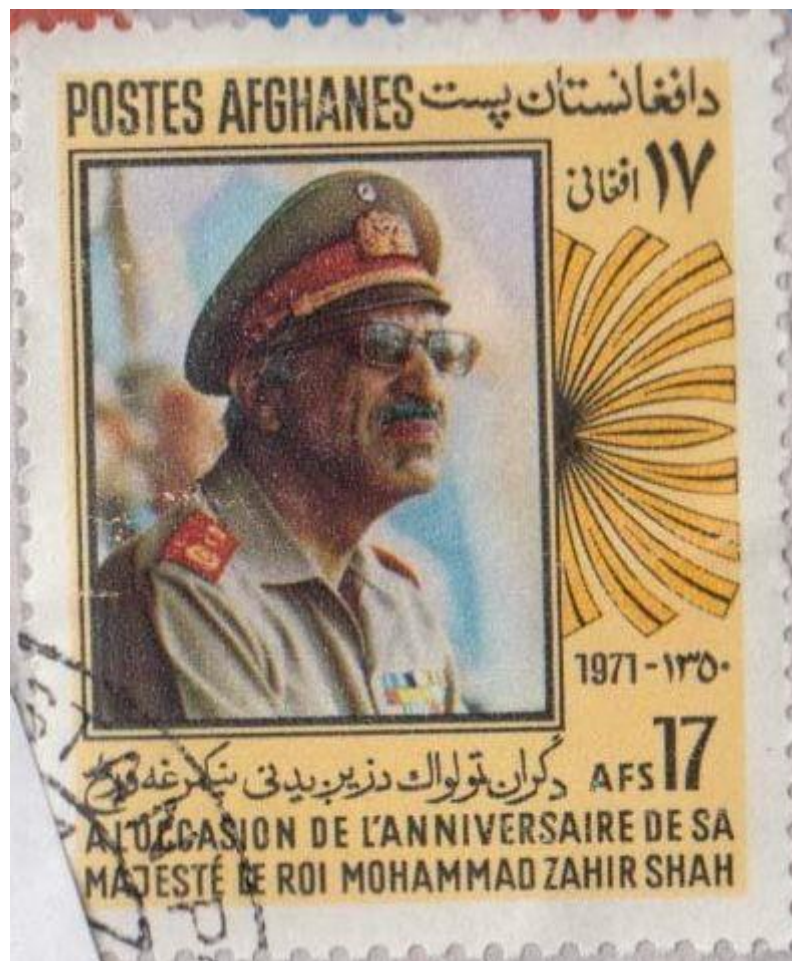


Some British military analysts thought that the war was ‘pointless’, the Afghans gained more autonomy, the British had fought to re-establish the borders of the Punjab (the region adjacent to Afghanistan) and they did so without achieving abatement in their troubles there.

The historian Fremont-Barnes concludes, *“The conclusion of the Third Afghan War did not end troubles for British authorities in India, for the fighting had caused unrest that could not be immediately quelled, especially in Waziristan, where the trouble actually deepened.”*

Warfare is a contest of wills and both sides were equally matched, hence the three wars with no clear result.

Afghanistan became monarchy in 1926 and it lasted till 1973. Mohammed Zahir Shah was the last king (1933-1973).



Credit: wikipedia.org

Zahir Shah was only 19 years old, when his father, Muhammad Nadir Shah, was killed before his eyes in November 1933, during an awards ceremony on the palace grounds in Kabul.

Zahir “reigned, but did not rule” for the next 20 years, ceding power to his paternal uncles. He never was a ruler, always at home on his property with a new breed of milk cows or fresh plantings of strawberries. Perhaps his gentle outlook on life was responsible for the introduction of constitutional monarchy in the 1960s, promising new rights for women in voting, education and the work force.

These changes were not popular within the traditional Islamic society. His reign, though marked by a rare peace, did not bring prosperity to the people.

He was overthrown in 1973 while in Italy, for medical treatments. His successor was his cousin, Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan, whom he had fired as prime minister a decade earlier. Zahir abdicated the throne rather than start bloodshed, in Afghan fashion.



Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan, Credit: facebook.com

Daoud Khan was an autocratic modernizer. He made himself the first President of the Republic of Afghanistan in 1973. In April 1978, he was assassinated by Nur Mohammed Taraki who took over the reins of the government, perpetuating the one-party rule.



Credit: Afghanistan-culture.com

Taraki, the leader of the Khalk (People) faction carried out a purge of the party and the government forcing leading members of the rival Parcham (Flag) faction into exile. His land reforms of 1st January 1979 proved very unpopular damaging the relationship with the Secretary of the Party, Hafizulla Amin, which resulted in the overthrow of his government on 14th September 1979. It is believed he was killed on 8th October 1979 on Amin's orders.



Hafizulla Amin, Credit: wikipedia.org

Leonid Brezhnev, the USSR Communist Party General Secretary on the advice of the party's ideologue Mikhail Suslov ordered Operation Storm-333 on 27th December 1979 based on the intelligence that Amin was planning to reach a deal with the US. The Special Forces stormed the Tajbeg Palace in Kabul and killed Amin and over 300 army and palace guards. Babrak Karmal was installed as President.



Babrak Kamal, Credit: rferl.org/

The Soviet–Afghan War was fought from 24 December 1979 to 15 February 1989 between the Afghan Mujahideen backed by the U.S., U.K., Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia on one side and the Afghan government supported by the USSR, on the other.



A former captain in the Afghan army poses with rebels near Herat on February 28, 1980

Credit: reddit.com

The U. S. undertook a covert program to assist the mujahideen to resist the Soviet occupation. Starting with President Carter's small-scale authorization in July 1979, the secret war assumed huge proportions under President Ronald Reagan, running up to \$700 million per year. The CIA arranged weapons for the mujahideen, through Pakistan's ISI, in coordination with Saudi Arabia, China, Egypt, and others. No Americans were directly involved in the fighting, and the overall cost to the American taxpayer was in the region of \$2 billion. The cost to the Afghans was in the form of lives lost: over a million killed, two million wounded and over six million refugees fled to Pakistan and Iran.

For the Soviet Union, the ten-year war was its largest military action in the post-World War era, and the long and protracted nature of the conflict and the failure of the Red Army to subdue the Afghans was partially responsible for the eventual breakup of the Soviet empire at the end of the 1980s. But more than this, the whole world has ended up paying the price in terms of the rise of militant Islamic fundamentalism that has shaped the contemporary world.



Soviet troops on the move in Afghanistan, mid-1980s, Credit: theatlantic.com

Artemy Kalinovsky of East European studies at the University of Amsterdam and Sergey Radchenko, Professor of International Politics at Cardiff University, wrote an opinion piece in the Washington Post on 15th February 2019 titled, 'Why Russia no longer regrets its invasion of Afghanistan', highlighting the following key points:

- When the Soviet leaders decided in December 1979 to invade Afghanistan, they did not expect the war to drag on for a decade.
- The Soviets outmatched their foe in conventional combat but could not hold the conquered territory, because of the guerilla tactics of the Mujahiddin.

- By early 1980s, it was clear that the war was unwinnable. Mikhail Gorbachev made it his priority to get the USSR out of Afghanistan when he became the General Secretary of the Party in March 1985.
- The problem was not the costs of the war; although expensive (it cost Moscow about \$7.5 billion between 1984 and 1987), it was a small percentage of the annual military budget (roughly \$128 billion). The problem was 'Reputation'. *"Are we going to sit there forever?"* Gorbachev asked the Politburo in November 1986, adding, *"We have to get out of there!"*



Mikhail Gorbachev, Credit: Yousuf Karsh, karsh.org

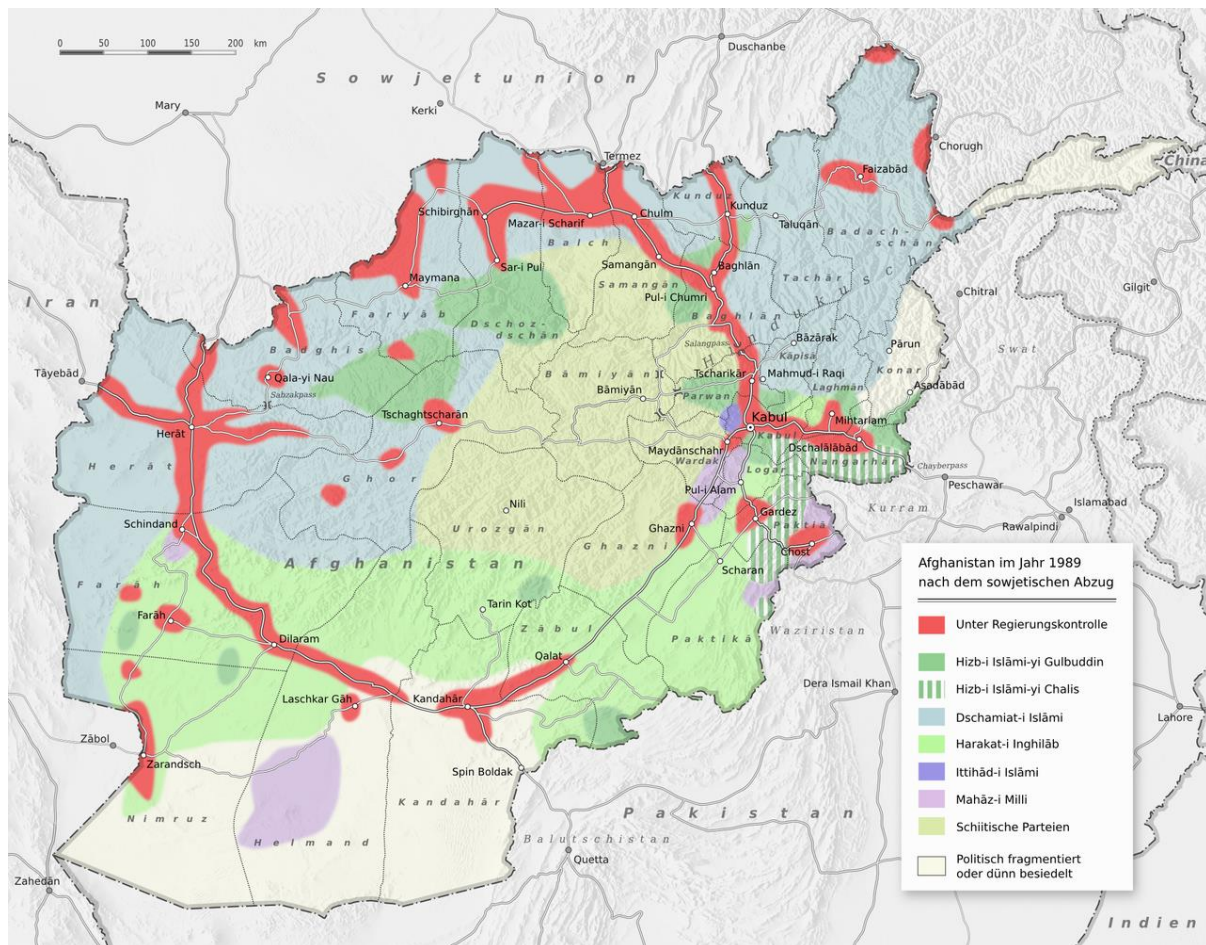


Soviet armoured vehicles crossing Hairaton bridge, Credit: bbc.com

The Geneva Accords, were signed on 14th April 1988 between Afghanistan and Pakistan, with the U. S. and the USSR as guarantors. The agreements contained the timetable for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan: To begin on 15th May 1988 and end by 15th February 1989.

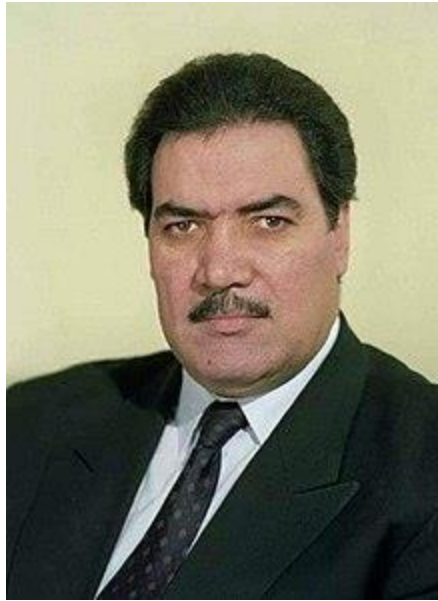
The Afghan Mujahideen, were neither a party to the negotiations nor to the Geneva accords and refused to accept the agreement. As a result, the combatants changed, the combat continued. The Soviet Union backed the regime of Mohammad Najibullah in its fight against the Mujahideen until 1992.

The First Afghan Civil War started on the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan on 15 February 1989 and lasted until 27 April 1992.



Afghanistan in 1989, following the Soviet withdrawal

Mujahideen groups, united in the Islamic Unity of Afghanistan Mujahideen, in the years 1989–1992 declared that they were battling the hostile ‘puppet regime’ of Mohammed Najibullah in Kabul. In March 1992, having lost the Soviet support, President Mohammad Najibullah agreed to step aside for a mujahideen coalition government. One mujahideen group, Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin, refused to confer and discuss a coalition government under the Pakistani sponsored Peshawar Peace Accords and invaded Kabul. This kicked off the Second Afghan Civil War (1992–1996) on 25 April 1992, initially among three, but later among five/six mujahideen groups.



Mohammad Najibullah, Credit: wikipedia.org

The Second Afghan Civil War (1992–1996) was among the Mujahideen factions, who after establishing the Islamic State of Afghanistan, began to fight one another. Violent battles were fought between the occupying factions in Kabul, this conflict ended in 1996 after the Taliban backed by Pakistan and Al-Qaeda took Kabul.



Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Credit: geotv.com



Burhanuddin Rabbani, Credit: news.un.org



Ahmad Shah Massoud, Credit: artnet.com

The Third Afghan Civil War (1996–2001) started after the Taliban capture of Kabul. By this time, the Taliban were in control of almost all of the country except the North, where the Northern Alliance was defending its strongholds. The Alliance's leader Ahmad Shah Massoud (The 'Lion of Panjshir') was assassinated by Al-Qaeda on 9th September 2001. Peter Bergen called the assassination “the curtain raiser for the Al-Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington, on 9/11.”

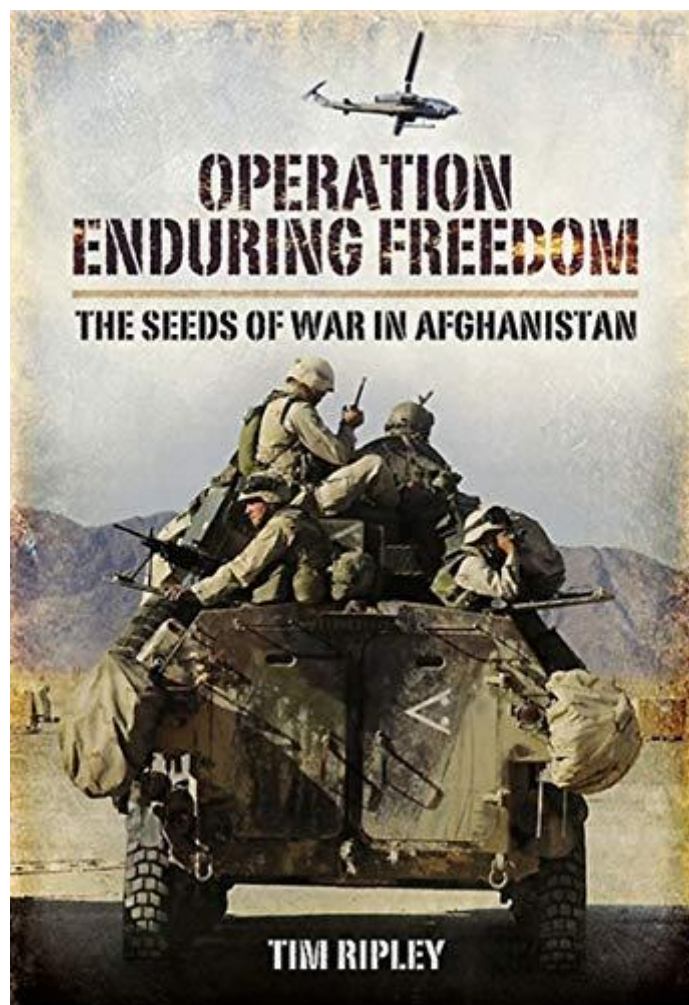


9/11 attack, Credit: nbcnews.com



Osama bin Laden, Credit: orfonline.org

Terrorists struck the U. S. on 11th September, 2001. Al-Qaeda operatives hijacked four commercial airliners, crashed them into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington. A fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. Three thousand people died in these twin attacks, which shook America. Although Afghanistan was the base for Al-Qaeda, none of the nineteen hijackers was Afghan.



Credit:amazon.com

The U. S. retaliated on 7th October, 2001. America's wrath was against the Taliban as they were hosting Al-Qaeda militants, and had refused to hand over Osama bin Laden. The U S fought the Taliban, provided air support to the Northern Alliance troops, who successfully drove most of the Taliban out of the country by December 2001. Soon, the U S military, with British support, started a bombing campaign against the Taliban called, 'Operation Enduring Freedom'. Canada, Australia, Germany and France joined in.

The Taliban regime unraveled rapidly after its loss at Mazar-e-Sharif on 9th November 2001, to the forces loyal to the late Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek military leader. Within a week, Taliban strongholds in Taloqan, Bamiyan, Herat, Kabul, and Jalalabad crumbled.

After tracking Osama bin Laden to the well-equipped Tora Bora caves, Afghan militias engaged the Al-Qaeda militants in a fierce two-week (3rd December to 17th December) battle. Osama bin Laden, escaped to Pakistan on horseback on 16th December.

On December 6, 2001 Afghanistan's newly appointed interim leader Hamid Karzai confirmed that the Taliban had agreed to surrender Kandahar, the Islamic regime's last stronghold. With it ended the Taliban rule.



U.S. Army Special Forces alongside Hamid Karzai in Kandahar, Credit: wikipedia.org

The US army launched Operation Anaconda, the first major ground assault involving 2000 of its troops and 1000 Afghan troops early March 2002, against the remaining 800 Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters in the Shah-i-Kot Valley. However, in an incomprehensible major strategic reversal, despite having defeated the

Taliban and having Al-Qaeda on the run, the Pentagon decided to move the military resources from Afghanistan to Iraq, which was now designated, the chief threat to the U.S. in its 'war on terror!'



US sends B-52 bombers to blitz the Taliban in Afghanistan, Credit: arabnews.com



However, in an incomprehensible major strategic reversal, despite having defeated the Taliban and having Al-Qaeda on the run, the Pentagon decided to move the military and other resources from Afghanistan to Iraq, which was now designated, the chief threat to the U.S. in its 'war on terror.'

Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld declared an end to 'major combat' in a press briefing in Kabul on 1st May 2003. Pushing the buck firmly, Rumsfeld said, President Bush and President Karzai *"have concluded that we are at a point where we clearly have moved from major combat activity to a period of stability."* There were 8000 U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan at that time.



Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Credit: cbsnews.com

The absurdity of this conclusion is clear now: eighteen years later, the US has withdrawn all its forces and the Taliban rules Afghanistan!

David Frum was a speechwriter for President George W. Bush and is a staff writer at The Atlantic magazine. He has written a very perceptive article in the August 16, 2021 issue of the magazine titled, 'The 1 Thing That Could've Changed the War in Afghanistan'.

He makes the (now) obvious point that if the U S had caught and killed Osama bin Laden in December 2001, the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan would have faded away almost immediately afterward.

'In the fall of 2001, the U.S. mission in Afghanistan was clear, limited, and achievable: find and kill bin Laden', he writes. After bin Laden escaped, that mission escalated into something hazy and impossibly difficult: to rebuild the Afghan society and remodel the state into a democracy.

It appears that Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld wished to escape Afghanistan to finish Saddam Hussein in Iraq for ulterior reasons.

By late 2002, Afghanistan had become 'yesterday's war' in the eyes of the Bush administration. It was preparing for a much bigger invasion, that of Iraq.

On Oct. 21, 2002 after spending several hours at the White House in meetings about Iraq, even Rumsfeld seemed taken aback by how much Afghanistan had receded from Bush's mind, according to a previously unpublished memo that the defense secretary wrote later that day.

Just before 3 p.m., Rumsfeld got a few minutes alone with the Commander in Chief. Rumsfeld asked President Bush whether he wanted to see Gen. Tommy Franks, the head of the U.S. Central Command and Lt. Gen. Dan McNeill, commander of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan for the past six months.

Bush was perplexed.

*“He said, ‘Who is General McNeill?’” Rumsfeld wrote in the memo. “I said, he is the general in charge of Afghanistan. He said, ‘Well, I don’t need to meet with him.’”*

McNeill told the interviewers that he was given little strategic guidance. He said the Pentagon mainly cared about keeping a lid on the number of U.S. troops.

*“There was no campaign plan in the early days,” he said. “Rumsfeld would get excited if there was any increase in the number of boots on the ground.”*

At the time, McNeill commanded about 8,000 troops, a tiny fraction of the number that would ultimately be deployed in Afghanistan.

By keeping troops to a minimum in Afghanistan, the Bush administration was looking to claim swift victories on two fronts at the same time.

On May 1, 2003, while standing under a ‘Mission Accomplished’ banner on an aircraft carrier, Bush declared an end to ‘major combat operations’ in Iraq.



Credit: nbcnews.com



On the very same day, Rumsfeld visited Kabul and announced an end to ‘major combat activity’ in Afghanistan.

Both declarations backfired spectacularly: Iraq descended into civil war and the Taliban steadily regrouped.

The Washington Post is one of the greatest newspapers in the world. It has won 69 Pulitzer Prizes; its journalists have received 18 Nieman Fellowships and 368 White House News Photographers Association awards. Founded in 1877, its printing of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 helped build opposition to the Vietnam War. In 1974, its reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein led the investigation into the Watergate scandal, which resulted in the resignation of President Richard Nixon.

In December 2019, Craig Whitlock, national security reporter of Washington Post obtained a trove of confidential government documents revealing that senior U.S. officials failed to tell the truth about the war in Afghanistan throughout the campaign, while making rosy pronouncements they knew to be false and hiding incontrovertible evidence the war had become unwinnable.

The documents were generated by a federal project examining the root causes for the failure of the longest armed conflict in U.S. history. They included more than 2,000 pages of unpublished notes of interviews with people who played a direct role in the war, from generals and diplomats to aid workers and Afghan officials.

The U.S. government tried to shield the identities of the vast majority of those interviewed for the project and conceal nearly all of their remarks. The Post won release of the documents under the Freedom of Information Act after a three-year legal battle.



Gen. Douglas Lute, Credit: wikimedia.org

*“We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan — we didn’t know what we were doing,”* Douglas Lute, a three-star Army general who served as the White House’s Afghan war coordinator during the Bush and Obama administrations, told government interviewers in 2015. He added, *“What were we trying to do there? We didn’t have the foggiest notion of what we were undertaking.”*

Since 2001, more than 775,000 U.S. troops were deployed in Afghanistan, many repeatedly. Of those, 2,300 died there and 20,589 were wounded, according to the US Defense Department figures. The Defense Department, State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development have spent or appropriated between \$934 billion and \$978 billion, according to an inflation-adjusted estimate calculated by Neta Crawford, a political science professor and co-director of the Costs of War Project at Brown University. (These figures do not include the money spent by other agencies such as the CIA and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

*“What did we get for this \$1 trillion effort? Was it worth \$1 trillion?”* Jeffrey Eggers, a retired Navy SEAL told government interviewers. He added, *“After the killing of Osama bin Laden, I said that Osama was probably laughing in his watery grave considering how much we have spent on Afghanistan.”*

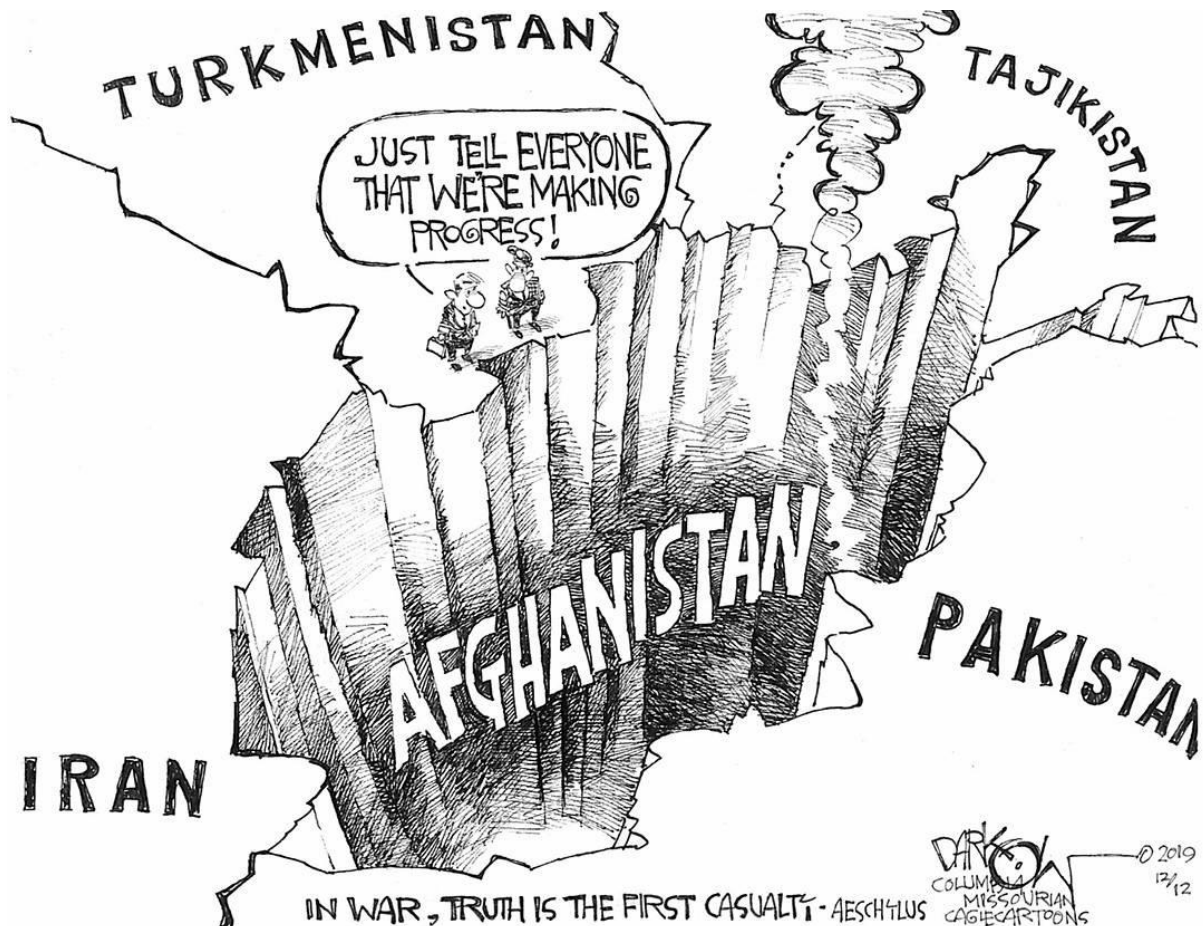


Credit: ocregister.com

Those interviewed described in explicit detail the sustained efforts by the top U.S. government officials to deliberately mislead the public. They said it was common practice at military headquarters in Kabul — and at the White House — to distort statistics to make it appear that the U S was winning the war when the opposite was true.

*“Every data point was altered to present the best picture possible,”* Colonel Bob Crowley, a senior counter-insurgency adviser to the U.S. military commanders in 2013 and 2014, told the government interviewers. *“Surveys, for instance, were totally unreliable but reinforced that everything we were doing was right and we became a self-licking ice cream cone.”*

John Sopko, Head of the federal agency, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) that conducted the interviews, told the Post that the documents show *“the American people have constantly been lied to.”* SIGAR was created by the US Congress in 2008 to investigate the waste and the fraud in the war.



Credit: the dailyworld.com

In 2014, at Sopko’s direction, SIGAR launched a side venture, titled ‘Lessons Learned,’ an \$11 million project to diagnose policy failures in Afghanistan, so that the US would not repeat the mistakes the next time it invaded a country or tried to rebuild a shattered one.

The ‘Lessons Learned’ staff interviewed more than 600 people with first-hand experience in the war. Most were Americans, but SIGAR analysts also travelled to London, Brussels and Berlin to interview NATO allies. They also interviewed about 20 Afghan officials. The reports did not name more than 90 percent of the people who were interviewed for the project. SIGAR promised anonymity to everyone it interviewed to avoid controversy over politically sensitive matters.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, the Post began seeking Lessons Learned interview records in August 2016. SIGAR refused, arguing that the documents were privileged and that the public had no right to see them. The Post sued SIGAR in federal court, twice to get the documents released.

*“We don’t invade poor countries to make them rich,” James Dobbins, a former senior U.S. diplomat who served as a special envoy to Afghanistan under Bush and Obama, told government interviewers. “We don’t invade authoritarian countries to make them democratic. We invade violent countries to make them peaceful and we clearly failed in Afghanistan.”*

In the beginning, the U.S. had a clear objective: to retaliate against al-Qaeda and prevent a repeat of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

As the war dragged on, the goals and mission kept changing, disagreements began to surface: some policy-makers wanted to use the war to turn Afghanistan into a democracy, others wanted to transform the Afghan culture and guarantee women’s rights, still some others wanted to reshape the regional balance of power among Pakistan, India, Iran and Russia.

*“With the Af-Pak strategy there was a present under the Christmas tree for everyone,” an unidentified U.S. official told government interviewers in 2015. “By the time you were finished, you had so many priorities and aspirations it was like no strategy at all.”*

As Commanders in Chief, Bush, Obama and Trump all promised the public the same thing: They would avoid falling into the trap of ‘nation-building’ in Afghanistan. They failed miserably. Biden too, failed, but to execute a proper, well-thought out, planned withdrawal.



Credit: cnn.com

The U. S. allocated more than \$133 billion to build Afghanistan, more than was spent, (adjusted for inflation), to revive the whole of Western Europe with the Marshall Plan after World War II.

*“Our policy was to create a strong central government, which was idiotic, because Afghanistan does not have a history of a strong central government,”* an unidentified former State Department official told government interviewers in 2015. *“The timeframe for creating a strong central government is 100 years, which we didn’t have.”*

Simon Jenkins reached the same conclusion in his opinion piece titled, ‘The west’s nation-building fantasy is to blame for the mess in Afghanistan’, in the Guardian of 20 Aug 2021. He refers to the lofty speech delivered by Tony Blair on April 23, 1999 to the Economic Club of Chicago, in which he wanted the west to intervene in countries “To spread the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights and an open society.” Jenkins concluded, ‘Individual nations best serve humanity by example or charity, not by war.’ Because, military interventions are never, humane.

Nation-building costs lots of money and the US was not short of it. It flooded the fragile country with more aid than it could possibly absorb. During the peak of the fighting, from 2009 to 2012, U.S. lawmakers and military commanders believed the more they spent on schools, bridges, canals and other civil-works projects, the faster Afghan security would improve. One contractor told the interviewers he was expected to dole out \$3 million daily for projects in a single Afghan district (There are 421 districts in 34 provinces in Afghanistan).

Col. Christopher Kolenda, who advised three U.S. generals in charge of the war, said, President Hamid Karzai’s government had *“organized itself into a kleptocracy”* by 2006 and that U.S. officials failed to recognize the lethal threat it posed to their strategy.



Credit: koreatimes.co.kr

*“Our biggest single project, sadly and inadvertently, of course, may have been the development of mass corruption,”* Ryan Crocker, US ambassador in Afghanistan in 2002 and 2011 - 2012, told the interviewers, *“Once it gets to the level I saw, it’s impossible to fix it.”*

In the Lessons Learned interviews, the U.S. military trainers accused Afghan commanders of pocketing salaries - paid by U.S. taxpayers - for tens of thousands of ‘ghost soldiers.’

On March 27, 2009 President Obama declared, *“Going forward, we will not blindly stay the course. Instead, we will set clear metrics to measure progress and hold ourselves accountable.”*

Colonel Bob Crowley, a senior counter-insurgency adviser to the U.S. military commanders in 2013 and 2014 told the interviewers, *“Truth was rarely welcome”* at military headquarters in Kabul. *“Bad news was often stifled,”* he said. *“When we tried to air strategic concerns about the willingness, capacity or corruption of the Afghan government, it was clear it wasn’t welcome.”*

James Dobbins, a senior U.S. diplomat who served as a special envoy to Afghanistan under Bush and Obama, told the interviewers it was a hubristic mistake to intervene in Iraq and Afghanistan at the same time.

*“First, you know, sort of just invade only one country at a time. I mean that seriously,”* Dobbins said, according to a transcript of his remarks. *“They take a lot of high-level time and attention and we’ll overload the system if we do more than one of these at a time.”*

Nicholas Burns, American diplomat and academic told the interviewers, *“After 2003-04, once we were fully engaged in both wars, I can’t remember us ever saying, ‘Should we be there? Are we being useful? Are we succeeding?’”*

Obama tore up Bush’s counter-terrorism strategy and approved a polar-opposite plan - a massive counter-insurgency campaign, backed by 150,000 U.S. and NATO troops, as well as tons of aid for a feeble Afghan government.

But Obama’s strategy was also destined to fail. U.S., NATO and Afghan officials told the interviewers, it tried to accomplish too much, too quickly, and depended on an Afghan government that was corrupt and dysfunctional. Worse, they said, Obama tried to set artificial dates for ending the war before it was over. All the Taliban had to do was wait him out.

*“There were a number of faulty assumptions in the strategy: Afghanistan is ready for democracy overnight, the population will support the government in a short time frame, more of everything is better,”* Col. Crowley told the interviewers.

In August 2009, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, then-Commander of the U.S. and NATO forces, wrote a classified 66-page assessment of the war, that called for a

‘properly resourced’ counter-insurgency campaign and laid out his proposed strategy in meticulous detail.



Gen. Stanley McChrystal

Credit: thefamouspeople.com

In the ‘Lessons Learned’ interviews, however, the U.S. and allied officials said McChrystal and the Obama administration ignored two basic questions: Whom were they fighting? And why?

Obama had repeatedly declared the goal of the war was to *“disrupt, dismantle and eventually defeat al-Qaeda.”* But the first draft of McChrystal’s strategic review did not even mention al-Qaeda, possibly because the group had all but disappeared from Afghanistan, according to an unnamed NATO official involved in the review.

*“In 2009, the perception was that al-Qaeda was no longer a problem,”* the NATO official told the interviewers. *“But the entire reason for being in Afghanistan was al-Qaeda. So, then the second draft included them.”*

Another major disconnect was that the United States and its allies could not agree on whether they were actually fighting a war in Afghanistan or doing something else, the NATO official said.

*“There were big implications with calling this a war,”* the NATO official added. *“Legally, under international law that has serious implications. So, we checked with the legal team and they agreed, it’s not a war.”*

To paper over the problem, McChrystal added a line in his report that said the conflict was *“not a war in a conventional sense.”*

The official description of the mission was even more convoluted.

The long definition stated that the objective for U.S. and NATO forces was to *“reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development, in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population.”*



Credit: time.com

In his December 1, 2009 speech to the cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Obama announced, he would deploy 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan, on top of the 70,000 that he and Bush had previously authorized. NATO and other U.S. allies would increase their forces to 50,000.

And, Obama added a last-minute wrinkle that caught many of his senior advisers by surprise. He imposed a timeline on the mission and said the extra troops would start to come home in 18 months.



Gen. David H. Petraeus, Credit: Britannica.com

*“The timeline was just sprung on us,”* Gen. David H. Petraeus, head of the U.S. Central Command at the time, said in the ‘Lessons Learned’ interview.

Barnett Rubin, adviser to the State Department told the interviewers he and other U.S. officials were ‘stupefied’ when they heard Obama reveal the timeline during the West Point speech. All that the Taliban had to do was lie low until U.S. and NATO troops left. *“There was a mismatch between deadline and strategy,”* Rubin added. *“With that deadline, you can’t use that strategy.”*

An unidentified Special Forces officer who deployed to Afghanistan in 2013 said, the new counterinsurgency strategy was rushed, with the troops receiving scant direction from above: *“We were given no documents that instructed us how to do our job. We were given the commander’s vague strategic priorities but that generally amounted to ‘go do good things.’ Both at the strategic and operational level, doing it right took a back seat to doing it fast.”*

Others said the strategy was based on buzzwords and lacked substance. The U.S. military leaders adopted an approach they labeled “clear, hold and build,” in which troops would clear insurgents from a district and remain until local government officials and Afghan security forces could stabilize the area with an influx of aid.

Gen. Stanley McChrystal was removed as Commander of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan on 23rd June 2010, following his reported criticism of the strategy of Obama administration. Gen. David Petraeus, architect of the 2007 Iraq surge, replaced McChrystal. Obama explained, *“This is a change in personnel, not a change in policy.”*

An unnamed diplomat told the interviewers, *“If I were to write a book, its title would be: ‘America goes to war without knowing why it does.’”*

The Taliban’s presence *“was a symptom, but we rarely tried to understand what the disease was,”* an unnamed USAID official said. *“In order to be clear, you need to know your enemy. You don’t know your enemy - you’re just tearing things down and pissing people off”* said another officer.

Shah Mahmood Miakhel, governor of Nangahar province, told the interviewers, there was a simple way to tell whether the U.S. strategy was working. He said,

*“I told Petraeus that in the counter-insurgency in which you don’t know your friend, you don’t know your enemy and environment, you are going to fail. I told him to check your list of people to be killed and captured, and see has this become longer or shorter. If it has increased, that means your strategy has failed.”*

In March 2011, when he was commander of U.S. and NATO forces, Petraeus told the US Congress, there were *“somewhere around 25,000 Taliban.”*

At the time of the US withdrawal in August 2021, the number of Taliban was estimated at 75000.

On 1st May 2011, Osama bin Laden, was killed in Pakistan by the U. S. forces. A gleeful Karzai said, international forces should focus on Pakistan.

In 'Lessons Learned' interviews, many officials said the Bush administration compounded its early mistake with the Taliban by making another critical error, treating Pakistan as a friend.

Pakistan's military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, had given the Pentagon permission to use Pakistani airspace and let the CIA track al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistani territory. The Bush White House did not recognize that it was a camouflage for Pakistan's support to the Taliban, according to the interviews.

*"Because of people's personal confidence in Musharraf and because of things he was continuing to do in helping police up a bunch of the al-Qaeda in Pakistan, there was a failure to perceive the double game that he started to play by late 2002, early 2003,"* Marin Strmecki, a senior adviser to Rumsfeld, told the interviewers.

Washington kept giving Pakistan billions of dollars a year to help fight terrorism. Yet Pakistani military and intelligence leaders never stopped supporting the Afghan Taliban and giving sanctuary to its leaders.

"The Obama administration just thought if you just hang in there Pakistan will see the light," a former White House official told the interviewers in 2015.

In a separate interview in 2015, another unnamed official complained that the Obama administration would not let U.S. troops attack Taliban camps on the Pakistani side of the border. "And still today we wonder what the problem is," the official said. "I talked to General Petraeus and I was saying that if I were a general and a bullet came and hit my men, I would follow it. And Petraeus said yeah well go talk to Washington."

Ryan Crocker, who served as the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan from 2004 to 2007, told the interviewers that Pakistani leaders did not even bother to hide their duplicity.

He recounted a conversation he had with Gen. Ashfaq Kayani, who was then Pakistan's intelligence chief, in which he said, "I know you think we're hedging our bets. You're right, we are, because one day you'll be gone again, it'll be like Afghanistan the first time, you'll be done with us, but we're still going to be here because we can't actually move the country. And the last thing we want with all of our other problems is to have turned the Taliban into a mortal enemy, so, yes, we're hedging our bets."



Credit: Atiq Shahid, toonsmag.com

In his December 2016 ‘Lessons Learned’ interview, Crocker said the only way to force Pakistan to change would be for Trump to keep the U.S. troops in Afghanistan indefinitely and give them the green light to hunt the Taliban on Pakistani territory.

*“It would allow him to say, ‘You worry about our reliability, you worry about our withdrawal from Afghanistan, I’m here to tell you that I’m going to keep troops there as long as I feel we need them, there is no calendar. That’s the good news. The bad news for you is we’re going to kill Taliban leaders wherever we find them: Baluchistan, Punjab, downtown Islamabad. We’re going to go find them, so maybe you want to do a strategic recalculation.’”*

In September 2016, SIGAR published a 164-page report that chronicled how corruption had harmed the U.S. mission in Afghanistan and recommended how to tackle the problem.

*“The U.S. government should take into account the amount of assistance a host country can absorb, and agencies should improve their ability to effectively monitor this assistance,” the report stated. “U.S. strategies and plans should incorporate anticorruption objectives into security and stability goals, rather than viewing anti-corruption as imposing trade-offs on those goals.”*

But the ‘Lessons Learned’ report about corruption ignored what the documents clearly stated: the seeds of runaway corruption were planted at the beginning of the war.

According to the interviews, the CIA, the U.S. military, the State Department and other agencies used cash and lucrative contracts to win the allegiance of Afghan warlords in the fight against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Intended as a short-term tactic, the practice ended up binding the United States to some of the country’s most notorious figures for years.

Among them was Mohammed Qasim Fahim Khan, a Tajik militia commander. As leader of the Northern Alliance, Fahim Khan played a critical role in helping the United States topple the Taliban in 2001. He served as Afghanistan’s defense minister from 2001 to 2004 and later as the country’s first vice president, despite a reputation for brutality and graft.

In a ‘Lessons Learned interview’, Crocker said he had no illusions about Fahim Khan. He recalled a blood-curdling encounter with the defense minister early 2002 when Fahim Khan nonchalantly informed him that another Afghan government minister had been murdered.

*“He giggled while he related this,” Crocker said. “Later, much later, it emerged, I don’t know if it was ever verified or not, it emerged that Khan himself had the minister killed. But I certainly*

*came out of those opening months with the feeling that even by Afghan standards, I was in the presence of a totally evil person.”*

The Bush administration treated Fahim Khan as a VIP.

Details of exactly how much money he and other warlords pocketed from the US remain secret, but confidential documents show the payouts were discussed at the highest levels of the US government.

In April 2002, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld dictated a top-secret memo ordering two senior aides to work with other U.S. agencies to devise *“a plan for how we are going to deal with each of these warlords — who is going to get money from whom, on what basis, in exchange for what, what is the quid pro quo, etc. Let’s get on it,”* he admonished.

Another warlord who was a prime beneficiary of U.S. largesse was Abdul Rashid Dostum. Dostum fought alongside CIA operatives and U.S. Special Operations forces after 9/11. He was accused of war crimes after his militia suffocated hundreds of Taliban prisoners in November 2001 by locking them in airtight shipping containers.

Like Fahim Khan, however, Dostum was embraced by the Bush administration, according to the Rumsfeld memos.

A few weeks after the Taliban prisoners in his custody died of asphyxiation, Dostum took the time to send a holiday letter to the U.S. commander in chief.

*“Dear U.S. president, George W. Bush!”* Dostum wrote in a note sent via U.S. military mail. *“Please accept my cardinal greetings on New Year’s Day! Afghan people, experiencing peace after a long period of sufferings are grateful for your efforts in this regard. I wish your Excellency good health, great successes and the best of luck,”* he wrote.

Army Gen. Tommy Franks, the head of U.S. Central Command, faxed the letter directly to Rumsfeld, who in turn ordered his staff to make sure it reached Bush’s desk.

In 2014, The Post reported that Dostum had been receiving about \$70,000 a month in CIA funds routed through the Afghan presidential palace.

In a 2015 ‘Lessons Learned’ interview, an unnamed U.N. official suggested the amount was actually higher, alleging that the United States and other sources had been giving Dostum \$100,000 a month ‘to not cause trouble.’

In a ‘Lessons Learned’ interview, Richard Boucher, who was assistant secretary of state for South Asia during the Bush administration, took a nuanced view of the warlords.

*“I hate corruption, but there are different kinds of corruption,” he said. “Corruption that spreads the wealth to people who need it”, he added, was tolerable, even necessary.*

The warlords were not the only ones the United States targeted with bribes.

In 2002 and 2003, when Afghan tribal councils gathered to write a new constitution, the U.S. government gave ‘nice packages’ to delegates who supported Washington’s stance on human rights and women’s rights, according to a U.S. official who served in Kabul at the time.

*“The perception that was started in that period: If you were going to vote for a position that the US favored, you’d be stupid to not get a package for doing it,” the unnamed official told the interviewers.*

In January 2010, Afghan anti-corruption agents trained by the United States raided the headquarters of the New Ansari Money Exchange, one of the country’s largest financial institutions, and carted away tens of thousands of documents. The U.S. officials suspected the politically connected firm was laundering money for narcotics traffickers and insurgents by moving billions of dollars to Dubai and other foreign destinations.

Michael Flynn, who would later become President Trump’s national security adviser, was the U.S. military intelligence chief in Afghanistan. *“It was huge”, he said. “I thought it was a huge success. We conducted that raid and in three days, we did a lot of exploration. We brought in like 45 people from around the country very quietly. New Ansari was just incredibly corrupt. It had double books and people were just stealing us blind.”*

However, despite a huge cache of incriminating evidence, the investigation soon hit a wall, Flynn added: *“Was anyone held accountable? No, no one was held accountable.”*

The stone-wall, it turned out, was inside Afghanistan’s presidential palace. Months after the raid, investigators wiretapped a conversation in which a senior aide to Karzai allegedly agreed to block the New Ansari probe in exchange for a bribe.

Afghan law enforcement agents arrested the aide, Mohammad Zia Salehi, in July 2010. Within hours, however, Karzai personally intervened and ordered Salehi’s release from jail, declaring that investigators had overstepped their authority. The Afghan government later dropped all charges against Salehi.

Some U.S. officials were furious and said it was time for a reckoning, while others argued it was more important to mollify Karzai and retain his support for the war. Complicating matters further was a New York Times report that Karzai’s aide had been on the CIA’s payroll for years.

The Obama administration backed down and the U.S.-inspired anti-corruption drive lost steam.

Less than two months after Salehi's catch and release, an even bigger scandal arose to test the Obama administration's resolve.

Kabul Bank, the country's biggest, nearly collapsed under the weight of \$1 billion in fraudulent loans. The Afghan government engineered an emergency bailout to stem a run on the bank as angry crowds lined up to withdraw their savings.

Investigators soon determined Kabul Bank had falsified its books to hide hundreds of millions of dollars in unsecured loans to politically connected business executives, including the president's brother Mahmoud Karzai and the family of Fahim Khan, the warlord then serving as the country's first vice president.

*"On a scale of one to 10, it was a 20 here,"* an unnamed U.S. Treasury Department official posted to Kabul as an Afghan government adviser told the interviewers. *"It had elements that you could put into a spy novel, and the connections between people who owned Kabul Bank and those who run the country."*

The official said Crocker, the U.S. military commanders and others in Washington, did not want to risk alienating Karzai, because they needed his support as tens of thousands of additional U.S. soldiers arrived in the war zone.

They also said Crocker and his allies did not want Congress or international donors to use the bank scandal as an excuse to cut off aid to Kabul.

Crocker told the interviewers he agreed corruption was an enormous problem that had sabotaged the war effort. But by the time the Kabul Bank scandal struck, it was too late, he said. *"The corruption was so entrenched and so much a part of the lifestyle of the establishment writ broadly, that I saw little prospect of change, just kind of a sense of futility."*

Crocker also said he was sympathetic to a counterargument from the Afghan president, who spread the blame more broadly. *"I was struck by something Karzai said and repeated a number of times during my tenure, which is that the West, led by the U.S., in his clear view, had a significant responsibility to bear for the whole corruption issue,"* Crocker said.

*"I always thought Karzai had a point, that you just cannot put those amounts of money into a very fragile state and society, and not have it fuel corruption,"* he added. *"You just can't."*

Victor Glaviano, who worked with the Afghan army as a U.S. combat adviser from 2007 to 2008, said, the soldiers habitually looted equipment supplied by the Pentagon. He told the interviewers that Afghan troops had *"beautiful rifles, but didn't know how to use them,"* and were wasting ammunition because they *"wanted to fire constantly."*

Since 2002, the United States has allocated more than \$83 billion in security assistance to Afghanistan, a sum greater than the defense budgets of many developing nations. In 2011, at the peak of the war, Afghanistan received \$11

billion in security aid from Washington, \$3 billion more than what Pakistan spent that year on its military.

On paper, the Afghan security forces looked robust, with 352,000 soldiers and police officers. But the Afghan government could prove that only 254,000 of them actually served in the ranks.

For years, Afghan commanders inflated the numbers so they could pocket salaries.

In October 2004, the Pentagon distributed a set of talking points that bragged about the Afghan army and police. The document praised the 15,000 soldiers in the Afghan army as *“a highly professional, multi-ethnic force, which is rapidly becoming a pillar of the country’s security.”*

It also touted how the Afghan national police — partly under the tutelage of NATO ally Germany — had 25,000 newly trained officers.

But internally, Bush administration officials shared anxieties and sounded alarms. In February 2005, Rumsfeld forwarded a confidential report to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice about the Afghan National Police, or ANP. The report was titled “ANP Horror Stories” and described how most of the police were illiterate, underequipped and barely trained.

*“Please take a look,” Rumsfeld wrote in a memo, accompanying the report. “This is the Afghan National Police situation. It is a serious problem. My impression is that these two pages were written in as graceful and non-inflammatory a way as is possible.”*

Virulent corruption compromised the security forces in other ways, also. Over time, the Afghan public became so disgusted by all the bribery and extortion that many questioned who represented the bigger evil - the Taliban or the Afghan government.

In a 2017 ‘Lessons Learned’ interview, Shah Mahmood Miakhel, former adviser to the Afghan Interior Ministry, said he once got an earful from district tribal leaders who could not stand either side.

*“I asked that why is it possible that a large number of about 500 security forces cannot defeat about 20 or 30 Taliban. The community elders replied that the security people are not there to defend the people and fight Taliban, they are there to make money”* by selling their weapons or fuel, recalled Miakhel, who later served as the governor of Nangahar province in eastern Afghanistan. *“I asked the elders that ok the government is not protecting you, but you are about 30,000 people in the district. If you don’t like Taliban then you must fight against them. Their response was that we don’t want this corrupt government to come and we don’t want Taliban either, so we are waiting to see who is going to win.”*

Next page, cartoon by Dan Nott, Credit: dannott.com

AFGHANISTAN RANKS 174<sup>TH</sup> OUT OF 176 ON AN INTERNATIONAL CORRUPTION INDEX. LUCKILY, THE U.S. IS STILL AROUND TO SHOW AFGHANS HOW TO DO DEMOCRACY RIGHT.



One unnamed U.S. military official told the interviewers in 2016 that about a third of the local police “*seemed to be drug addicts or Taliban.*”

Sarah Chayes ran development organizations in Kandahar from 2002-09 and later served as a Special Assistant to two commanders of the international military forces and to the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. She has written a very detailed account of her experiences in the *Foreign Affairs* magazine on September 3, 2021, titled, ‘Afghanistan’s Corruption Was Made in America’.

Corruption, according to Chayes, in U.S.-occupied Afghanistan was a system. Two surveys conducted in 2010 estimated the total amount paid in bribes each year in Afghanistan at between \$2 billion and \$5 billion, an amount equal to at least 13 percent of the country’s GDP. In return for the kickbacks, officials at the top sent protection back down the line.

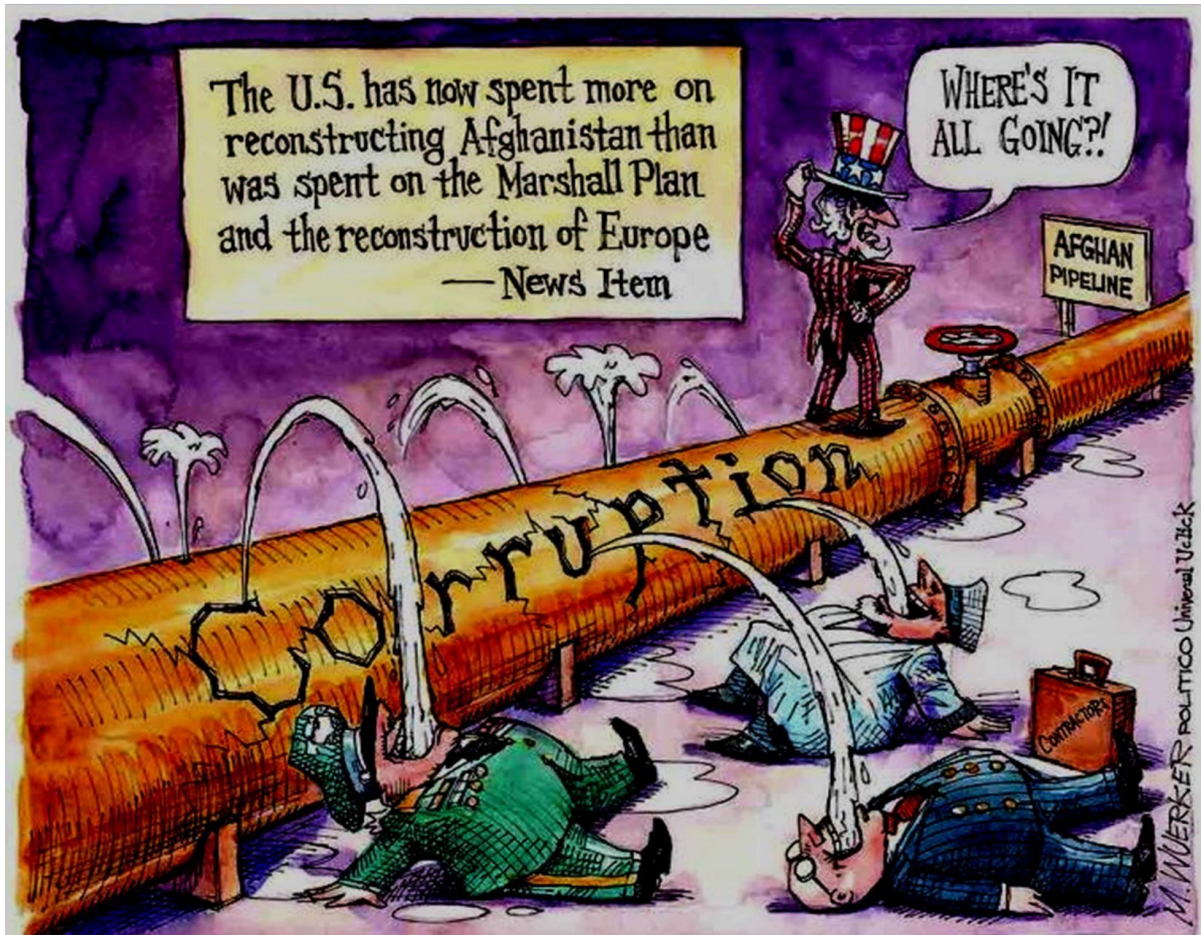
The networks that ran Afghanistan were flexible and dynamic, with internal rivalries as well as alliances. These networks often operated like diversified family businesses: the nephew of a provincial governor would get a major reconstruction contract, the son of the governor’s brother-in-law would get a plum job as an interpreter for U.S. officials, and the governor’s cousin would drive opium shipments to the Iranian border. All were ultimately part of the same enterprise.

Civilian officials at the Pentagon and their counterparts at the U.S. Department of State and in the intelligence agencies had long dismissed corruption as a significant factor in the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. Many subscribed to the belief that corruption was just part of Afghan culture.

Farah Stockman, the Pulitzer prize-winning member of the Board of the New York Times, wrote a stinging critique on the corruption in the conduct of the war in Afghanistan, on September 13, 2021, titled, ‘What Failure? For Some, the War in Afghanistan Was a Big Success’

She quotes the case of Hikmatullah Shadman, (reported by Matthieu Aikins of the New Yorker on March 7, 2016) who was just a teenager when American Special Forces rolled into Kandahar on the heels of Sept. 11. They hired him as an interpreter, paying him some \$1,500 a month (20 times the salary of a local police officer). By his late 20s, he owned a trucking company that supplied U.S. military bases, earning him more than \$160 million.

If a small fry like Shadman could get so rich off the war on terror, consider the case of Gul Agha Sherzai, a warlord-turned-governor, whose patron was the C.I.A. His large extended family supplied everything from gravel to furniture to the military base in Kandahar. His brother controlled the airport. He is believed to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars.



Credit: pinterest.com

Corruption, Stockman says, wasn't a design flaw in the war. It was a design feature. The US did not topple the Taliban in 2001, it paid warlords bags of cash to do it.

As the nation-building project started, those warlords became generals, governors and members of Parliament and the cash payments kept flowing.

Instead of a nation, what the US really built were more than 500 military bases and the personal fortunes of the people who supplied them. That had always been the deal. She cites a memo written by Secretary Rumsfeld in April 2002, ordering aides to come up with *"a plan for how we are going to deal with each of these warlords, who is going to get money from whom, on what basis, in exchange for what, what is the quid pro quo, etc."*

The war proved enormously lucrative for many Americans and Europeans, too. One 2008 study estimated that some 40 percent of the money allocated to Afghanistan actually went back to donor countries in corporate profits and consultant salaries. Only about 12 percent of U.S. reconstruction assistance given to Afghanistan between 2002 and 2021 actually went to the Afghan government.

*“It’s a bugbear of mine that Afghan corruption is so frequently cited as an explanation (as well as an excuse) for Western failure in Afghanistan,”* according to Jonathan Goodhand, a professor in Conflict and Development Studies at SOAS University of London. Americans *“point the finger at Afghans”*, he says, *“whilst ignoring their role in both fueling and benefiting from the patronage pump.”*

So, who won the war on terror?

American defense contractors, many of whom were politically connected companies that had donated to George W. Bush’s presidential campaign, according to the Center for Public Integrity, a nonprofit that has been tracking spending in a series of reports called the Windfalls of War.

Stockman quotes a forensic accountant who served on a military task force that analyzed \$106 billion worth of Pentagon contracts, who estimated that 40 percent of the money ended up in the pockets of “insurgents, criminal syndicates or corrupt Afghan officials”.

Matthieu Aikins, a Schell Fellow at the Nation Institute and winner of George Polk Award for his reporting on Afghanistan wrote a fascinating long story on ‘How a young Afghan military contractor became spectacularly rich’ in the New Yorker on March 7, 2016, which has been cited by Farah Stockman in her article in the New York Times of September 13, 2021.

According to him, General David Petraeus, the principal architect of the U.S. counter-insurgency strategy, encouraged the practice of pumping money into the Afghan economy, where the per-capita G.D.P. at the time of the invasion was around a hundred and twenty dollars. He believed that money had helped buy peace during his command of American forces in Iraq. *“Employ money as a weapons system,”* Petraeus wrote in 2008. *“Money can be ‘ammunition.’”*



The corruption in the Afghan war was so extreme that the US military, in some cases, funded its own enemy.

In June 2010, the Congressional subcommittee released a report, titled “Warlord, Inc.,” which concluded that U.S. government funds were likely going to the same people who were killing American soldiers. According to the subcommittee, the military had known about the problem for at least a year, but absolutely nothing was done.

The report landed amid a growing realization in Washington that corruption in Afghanistan was jeopardizing President Obama’s plan to stabilize the country before withdrawing American troops. That fall, Afghanistan’s financial system nearly collapsed after it was revealed that a group of well-connected businessmen and officials, including the brothers of President Karzai and his Vice-President had fraudulently acquired nearly a billion dollars in loans from Kabul Bank. Far from being a source of stability, American money was part of the problem, and the U.S. officials had little idea where it was going.

*“I am deeply troubled that the U.S. military can pursue, attack, and even kill terrorists and their supporters,”* John Sopko, the head of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), later wrote in a quarterly report to Congress, *“but that some in the U.S. government believe we cannot prevent these same people from receiving a government contract.”*

*“You know, Taliban soldiers are a hundred times cheaper than American soldiers,”* Pashtoon, the member of parliament from Kandahar, said. *“So, for a lot less money the Taliban can fight for a long time.”*

The military had long been reluctant to address corruption. But now General Petraeus, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, conceded that the flood of U.S. money into Afghanistan was *“both an opportunity and a danger.”* He added that, uncontrolled, it could *“unintentionally fuel corruption, finance insurgent networks, strengthen criminal patronage networks, and undermine our efforts in Afghanistan.”* Money, it seemed, was a double-edged weapons system.

The military created Task Force 2010, a team of forensic accountants, law-enforcement agents, intelligence analysts, lawyers, and auditors, to scrutinize Afghan contractors. The team reported that, of the thirty-one billion dollars in contracts that it inspected, an estimated three hundred and sixty million dollars had reached corrupt officials, criminals, or the Taliban.

The high-level patronage of massive corruption can be gauged from the fact that when the hero of Matthieu Aikins' New Yorker story, 'the young Afghan military contractor became spectacularly rich', Hikmatullah Shadman was arrested and jailed on February 28, 2010 until a call came from the Presidential palace, ordering his release.

Shadman's accounts were unfrozen, and he immediately transferred seventy-four million dollars to his bank accounts in Dubai.

Shadman is not alone in amassing fortune during the conduct of the American war in Afghanistan.

The American press was agog at the news of the reported purchase of a \$20 Million Beverly Hills Mansion, by the son of the former defense minister of Afghanistan, who also owns a \$5.2 million Miami Beach condo at the prestigious St. Regis Bal Harbour Resort. Various reports say that his older brother Hamed Wardak, is a successful businessman who ran military transportation company NCL Holdings, which had lucrative U.S. government contracts reportedly worth \$360 million. Washington Life magazine referred to him as a 'philanthropist'; he is connected to lobbying efforts to keep the US involved in the Afghanistan conflict, according to The Nation.

Jason Linkins is a deputy editor at The New Republic. In a hard-hitting story in the magazine on August 21, 2021 titled, 'The War in Afghanistan Was a Scam' he quotes, Major General Smedley Butler, *'War is a racket. It always has been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious.... It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.'*

He asks a simple question: Who benefits?

The war in Afghanistan has been a colossal boom-time for the military-industrial complex. As Harvard public policy professor Linda Bilmes told Marketplace this week, *"the whole system has been set up in a way to enable contractors to rip off the government."* And Foreign Policy's C. Christine Fair has reiterated, *'the bewildering corruption by U.S. firms and individuals working in Afghanistan'*.

The mainstream media is flush with ex-generals and Pentagon habitués, who took refuge in cable news green rooms during the war, where they enjoyed lucrative second careers as the war industry's *'message force multipliers.'*

Quincy Institute senior adviser Eli Clifton has pointed out, *"The weapons biz also had financial ties to 2/3rds of the Afghanistan Study Group, currently being cited by The Washington Post and Wall Street Journal editorial boards as offering an alternative to Biden's withdrawal."* Politico magazine's story about 'Biden's two tragic Afghanistan

missteps,' was 'presented by' Lockheed Martin. This is one fearsome vertically-integrated military engagement!

The two decade-long calamitous war was, therefore, the very thing General Butler described in 1935: *"Conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many."* Only a small inside group will ever really know what this war was about.

Opium has been an important part of the Afghan economy.

The Afghanistan papers provide a historical perspective to the opium problem during the war.

In late 2017, U.S. military commanders in Afghanistan launched Operation Iron Tempest, a storm of airstrikes by B-52 bombers, F-22 Raptors and other warplanes. The main target: a network of clandestine opium production labs that the U.S. officials said, was helping generate \$200 million a year in drug money for the Taliban.

*"This is a new war, and the gloves are off,"* Brig. Gen. Lance Bunch said during a news conference in Kabul. *"That is our new strategy going forward, and it's definitely been a game-changer and the Taliban is definitely feeling it. The war has changed."*

But within a year, Operation Iron Tempest had fizzled out. Many of the suspected labs turned out to be empty, mud-walled compounds. After more than 200 airstrikes, the U.S. military concluded it was a waste of resources to keep blowing up primitive targets with advanced aircraft and laser-guided munitions.

Of all the failures in Afghanistan, the war on drugs has been perhaps the most worthless, according to the Afghanistan papers.

Since 2001, the U S has spent about \$9 billion on various programs to stop Afghanistan from supplying the world with heroin. In several interviews, however, the key players in the anti-narcotics campaign have acknowledged that none of them have worked.

*"Drugs was a nasty thing that had to be contended with,"* Douglas Wankel, a former Drug Enforcement Administration agent who led a federal counternarcotics task force in Kabul from 2004 to 2007, told government interviewers. *"The biggest problem was corruption in Afghanistan and drugs was part of it. You couldn't deal with one without dealing with the other."*

During the Bush administration, most U.S. generals wanted nothing to do with the battle over opium. According to the interviews, they saw it as a distraction or hindrance to their primary mission of fighting terrorists.

During the Obama administration, as evidence mounted that drug money was financing the insurgency, the generals began to see opium as a military threat. Because the generals' war strategy hinged on winning the support of the Afghan people, however, they were reluctant to take action that could alienate poppy farmers, a large chunk of the population, or U.S.-friendly warlords who profited from opium trade.

Andre Hollis served as the Pentagon's top civilian official for drug issues from 2001 to 2003 and later as a senior adviser to the Afghan Counter-narcotics Ministry. He said the U.S. Defense Department *"fundamentally didn't understand what getting involved in counter-narcotics entailed."*

*"Everyone was focusing on traditional roles. They would only talk to those in their battle space. From a DOD perspective, it was tactical, and about finding and killing al-Qaeda,"* he told the interviewers. *"Everyone had their own agenda and counter-narcotics was way down the list."*

In June 2018, SIGAR published a 270-page report that documented the failure of the war on Afghan opium and made policy recommendations for dealing with the problem.

Afghan farmers have been growing varieties of the opium poppy for generations. With a little irrigation, the plants thrive in warm, dry climates and are especially bountiful in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, the heart of the war campaign.

In July 2000, when the Taliban controlled most of the country, Mullah Mohammad Omar, declared that opium was un-Islamic and banned growing poppies.

Much to the surprise of the rest of the world, the ban worked. Afraid to cross the Taliban, Afghan farmers immediately ceased planting poppies. The UN estimated that poppy cultivation plunged by 90 percent from 2000 to 2001.

*"When [the] Taliban ordered to stop poppy cultivation, Mullah Omar could enforce it with his blind eye. No one cultivated poppy after the order was passed,"* Tooryalai Wesa, former governor of Kandahar province, said in a 'Lessons Learned' interview. *"Now, billions of dollars were given to the Ministry of Counter-narcotics. It didn't decrease anything. The poppy production even increased."*

The Taliban had hoped the 2000 opium ban would win favor in Washington and entice the United States to provide humanitarian aid. But those hopes collapsed when al-Qaeda which had been given sanctuary by the Taliban, launched the 9/11 attacks.

As soon as the U.S. military invaded and toppled the Taliban in 2001, Afghan farmers resumed sowing their poppy seeds. According to the interviews, U.S.

officials were concerned about a rebound in opium production but focused on other priorities, such as hunting for Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders.

President Bush asked the United Nations and NATO allies to tackle the problems of opium production and trafficking. Britain agreed to take charge but got off to a disastrous start, according to the interviews.

In the spring of 2002, British officials floated an irresistible offer. They agreed to pay Afghan poppy farmers \$700 an acre, a fortune in the impoverished, war-ravaged country, to destroy their crops. The word of the \$30 million program ignited a poppy-growing frenzy. Farmers planted as many poppies as they could, offering part of their yield to the British while selling the rest on the open market. Others harvested the opium sap right before destroying their plants and got paid anyway!

In a 'Lessons Learned' interview, Anthony Fitzherbert, a British agricultural expert, called the cash-for-poppies program *"an appalling piece of complete raw naivete,"* saying that the people in charge had *"no knowledge of nuances and I don't know if they really cared."*

*"Afghans like most other people are quite willing to accept large sums of money and promise anything knowing that you will go away,"* Metrisko, a former U.S. diplomat said in an oral-history interview. *"The British would come and hand out sums of money and the Afghans would say, 'Yes, yes, yes, we're going to burn it right now,' and the Brits would leave. They would then get two sources of income from the same crop."*

In a confidential October 2004 memo, Rumsfeld reported to several senior Pentagon officials that the French defense minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, had recently told him she was worried the opium trade was getting out of control and could weaken Afghan President Hamid Karzai's grip on power.

*"She thinks it is important to act soon, to avoid having a situation where drug money elects the Afghan Parliament, and the Afghan Parliament then opposes Karzai and corrupts the government,"* Rumsfeld wrote.

One month later, Rumsfeld sent another confidential memo to Doug Feith, the Pentagon's policy chief, to complain about the Bush administration's aimless approach.

*"With respect to the drug strategy for Afghanistan, it appears, no one's in charge,"* Rumsfeld wrote. *"Department of State has to develop a strategy."*

In a September 2005 diplomatic cable, then-U.S. Ambassador Ronald Neumann warned the White House and the State Department that *"narcotics could be the factor that causes corruption"* to consume Afghanistan's fledgling democracy. *Many of our contacts*

*correctly fear that the burgeoning narcotics sector could spin Afghan corruption out of anyone's control,"* Neumann wrote in the cable. *"They fear that the sheer mass of illegal money from growing, processing, and trafficking opium could strangle the legitimate Afghan state in its cradle."*

But Bush administration officials could not agree on a unified course of action.

There was immense political pressure from Washington and London to show that anti-opium programs were working. In a 'Lessons Learned' interview, an unnamed former British government contractor said that U.S., British and U.N. officials exaggerated data to make it appear that they had destroyed far more poppy fields than they really had from 2005 to 2007.

*"There was systematic over-reporting and intimidation but no one wanted to hear it,"* the former British contractor told U.S. government interviewers. *"We ended up with absurd numbers."*

Neumann, who had been the U.S. ambassador in Kabul, told government interviewers that there was *"desperate pressure for short-term results."*

In a 2015 'Lessons Learned' interview, Neumann said the flawed eradication programs were "driven by Congress wanting to see something tangible," even though it was clear there was no simple solution. He added that *"Washington did not understand that a successful counter-narcotics effort was going to be a function of a massive rural development effort."*

Many U.S. lawmakers and Bush administration officials wanted to adopt an aggressive approach that Washington had backed in Colombia to combat cocaine trafficking. A core part of that program, known as Plan Colombia, was the aerial spraying of herbicides to eradicate coca plants — despite concerns that the chemicals could cause cancer.

The Bush administration touted Plan Colombia as a success, but some U.S. officials said it was a mistake to think it could work in Afghanistan.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, however, cheerfully declared at a Kabul news conference on November 19, 2009, *"We are starting to see results. Farmers are beginning to switch from poppies to pomegranates."*

In Helmand province, the epicenter of the poppy belt, USAID and the U.S. military paid Afghans to dig or renovate miles of canals and ditches to irrigate fruit trees and other crops. But the canals worked just as well to irrigate poppies — which were much more profitable to grow. Similarly, USAID invested millions of dollars to entice Helmand farmers to start wheat-growing operations. While wheat production increased, farmers relocated their poppy fields to other parts of the

province. Between 2010 and 2014, poppy cultivation across the country nearly doubled, according to U.N. estimates.

Some U.S. officials suggested part of the problem was that Washington fundamentally misunderstood Afghanistan and mistakenly viewed opium as just another crop.

*“Afghanistan is not an agricultural country; that’s an optical illusion,”* Barnett Rubin, an academic authority on Afghanistan who served as a senior adviser to Holbrooke, said in a ‘Lessons Learned’ interview. The *“largest industry is war, then drugs, then services,”* he added. *“Agriculture is down in fourth or fifth place.”*

U.S. military commanders were relieved by the Obama administration’s decision to abandon poppy eradication programs. They saw them as unnecessary irritants to Afghan villagers whose loyalty they were trying to win, according to William Wechsler, who served as the Pentagon’s top civilian in charge of drug issues from 2009 to 2012.

At the same time, military officials were growing concerned that the opium trade was providing a major revenue stream to the Taliban, which had imposed taxes on farmers and traffickers. U.S. commanders wanted badly to deprive the Taliban of drug money but were not sure how to do it, Wechsler told the interviewers.

Commanders were open to integrating law enforcement, drug interdiction and even economic development programs into their counter-insurgency strategy but never received clear marching orders from the Obama administration, he said.

*“I am not aware of any civilian effort that told the military what they should do in counter-narcotics,”* Wechsler added. *“The military would have been happy with a civilian counter-narcotics strategy.”*

But Todd Greentree, a former State Department official who served as a political adviser to the U.S. military in Afghanistan from 2008 to 2012, said it proved impossible to develop a coherent strategy for all arms of the U.S. government.

*“There was contradiction between counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency, because so much of the rural population depended on income from opium production,”* he said in an oral-history interview. *“Counter-insurgency operations that relied on support of the population would be disrupted by counter-narcotics operations that were intended to eradicate opium.”*

*“We were always debating and discussing it,”* he added. *“But at the level of policy, it was a contradiction that was left unmanaged.”*



Afghan drug barons are branching out into methamphetamines, Credit: economist.com

Hamid Mir, the celebrated Pakistani journalist writing in the Washington Post on 5th October 2021 has alerted that in the next few years, a flood of drugs from Afghanistan may pose a bigger threat to the west than terrorism. He added, opium cultivation is estimated to have increased from 8,000 hectares in 2001 to 224,000 hectares in 2020.

The war in Afghanistan formally ended on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2021, capping two decades of a multitrillion-dollar conflict overseen by four presidents and spurred on by a generation of generals and politicians who effortlessly misled the public, resulting in the deaths of more than 2,300 American soldiers (+3,814 contractors) and 64124 Afghan forces.

In announcing his decision to withdraw from Afghanistan, President Biden said, *"I refused to continue the war that was no longer in the interest of our people."*

William D. Hartung, the director of the Arms and Security Program at the Center for International Policy of Brown University released their report titled, 'Profits of War' on September 13, 2021. The report revealed some startling facts:

- Pentagon spending has totaled over \$14 trillion since the start of the war in Afghanistan, of which \$2.3 trillion is estimated to have been spent in the Afghanistan and Pakistan war zone.
- One-third to one-half of the total expenditure was awarded to military contractors.

- One-quarter to one-third of all Pentagon contracts have gone to just five major corporations: Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman.
- The \$75 billion in Pentagon contracts received by Lockheed Martin in fiscal year 2020 is well over one and one-half times the entire budget for the State Department and Agency for International Development for that year, which totaled \$44 billion.
- Weapons makers have spent \$2.5 billion on lobbying over the past two decades, employing, on average, over 700 lobbyists per year over the past five years. That is more than one for every member of Congress.
- In 2011, the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan estimated that waste, fraud and abuse had totaled between \$31 billion and \$60 billion.
- As the U.S. reduces the size of its military footprint in Iraq and Afghanistan, exaggerated estimates of the military challenges posed by China have become the new rationale of choice in arguments for keeping the Pentagon budget at historically high levels. Military contractors will continue to profit from this inflated spending.



Credit: ocregister.com

According the Afghanistan Papers, the toll of Afghanistan war data is as follows:

Since 2001, an estimated 157,000 people have been killed in the Afghanistan war:

Afghan civilians 43,074\*

Afghan security forces 64,124\*

Humanitarian aid workers 424

U.S. military personnel 2300

U.S. contractors 3,814

NATO and coalition troops 1,145

Taliban fighters and other insurgents 42100

Journalists and media workers 67

So, now that the Afghanistan war is a thing of the past, will the US divert the colossal defense budget to health, education, social infrastructure etc.?

Not a chance.

In a critical piece in the New Republic magazine on September 1, 2021, Grace Segers pointed out that Washington's addiction to defense spending will outlast Afghanistan. The House Armed Services Committee is marking up the latest National Defense Authorization Act, which will be packed with more than \$700 billion in new spending.

Even as one war ends, the US Congress's penchant to increase defense spending remains unscathed.

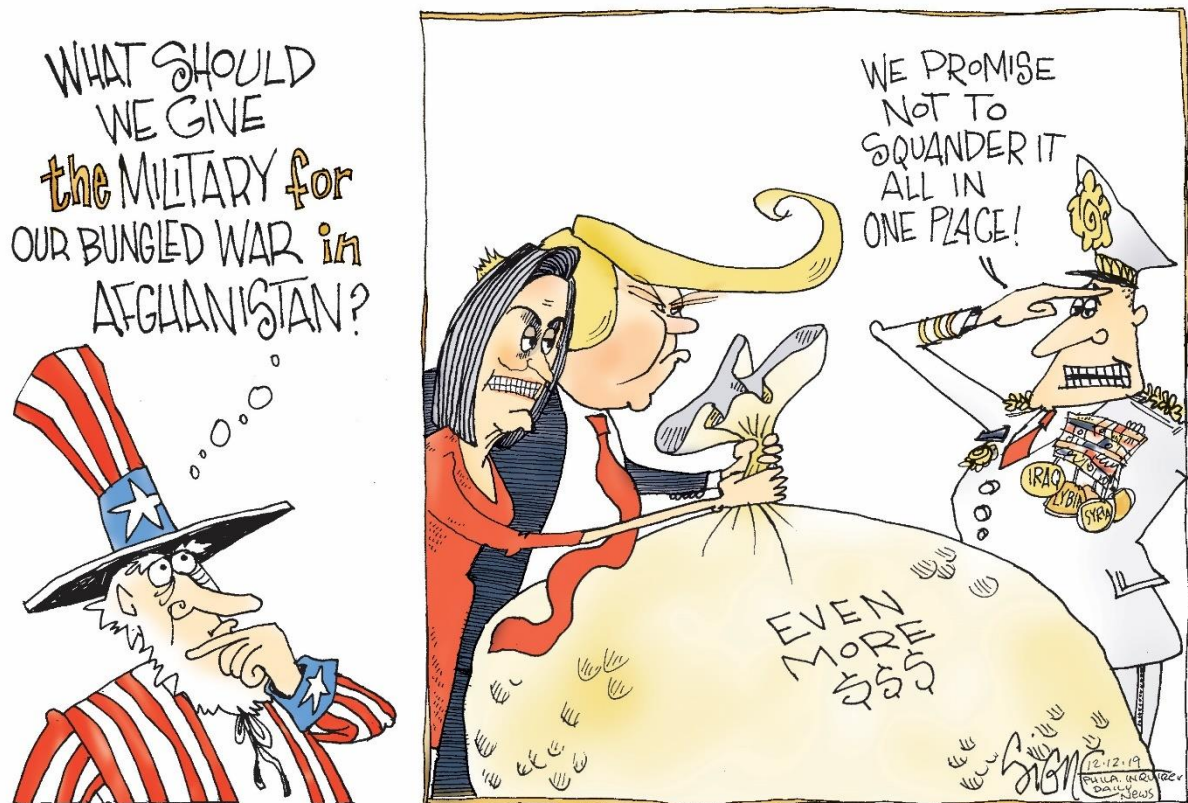
There is a very powerful nexus between the military-industrial-media complex and the US politicians. "Never waste a good crisis", said Winston Churchill. The 2.0 version of the Complex says, 'Never waste a good crisis, make money!'

Lobbying is an art and a science and the US has written the book on it. Analyst James A. Thurber estimated in 2014 that the number of working lobbyists was close to 100,000 (the registered lobbyists 12,281) and that the industry brought in \$9 billion annually. And who are the most effective lobbyists? Retired senators, generals, admirals, top civil servants etc.

Political scientist Thomas R. Dye said, "politics is about battling over scarce governmental resources: who gets them, where, when, why and how."

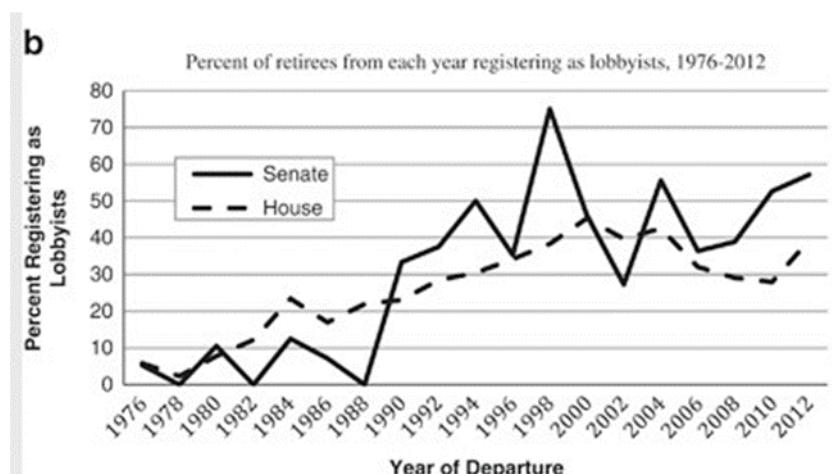
Represent.us reported that an average US senator has to pull in more than \$14,000 dollars every single day, just to stay in office.

One recent study found that ‘on average, for every dollar spent on lobbying, the politically active US corporations received \$760 from the government.’ That’s a 76,000% return on investment. And it works on both sides of the aisle, lobbying firms raise money for Republicans and Democrats at the same time.

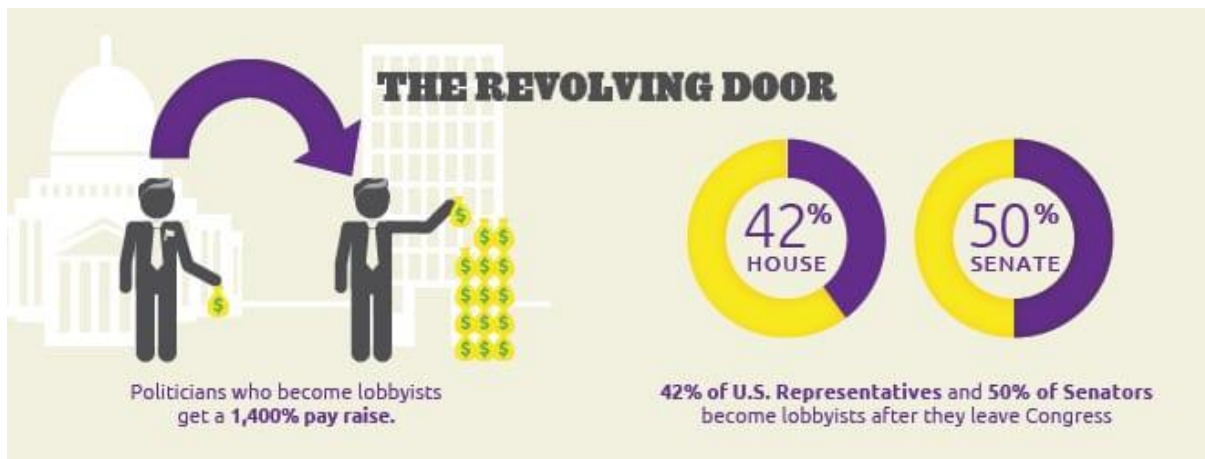


Credit: inquirer.com

AllGov.com reported on November 26, 2012 that about 70% of the three- and four-star generals and admirals who retired between 2009 and 2011 went on to join defense companies or became consultants.



A recent study by the Government Accountability Office, (GAO) found that between 2014 and 2019, more than 100,000 military or civilian senior officials or acquisition officials left the Defense Department. In 2019 alone, a total of 1,718 of them (1,616 former acquisition officials, and 102 former generals, admirals or senior civilians) had been hired after 2016 at one of 14 major contractors the GAO reviewed, including Northrop Grumman Corp., Lockheed Martin Corp. and Raytheon Technologies. That was after the ‘cooling off’ period during which former employees had to wait before taking lobbying jobs.



In the beginning, the U.S. had a clear objective: to retaliate against al-Qaeda and prevent a repeat of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

So where does al Qaeda and ISIS stand today in Afghanistan?

Robin Wright, the author of ‘Rock the Casbah: Rage and Rebellion Across the Islamic World’ writing in the New Yorker on August 23, 2021, was quite clear in her assessment: Afghanistan has once again, become a cradle for Jihadism and Al Qaeda.

She recalls her conversation with General Kenneth (Frank) McKenzie, Jr., the head of Central Command, in March 2021. She asked him, *“Do you really think, given the intermarriage, the interweaving of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, that the Taliban is really ever going to be able or willing to restrain Al Qaeda from doing anything against us?”*. McKenzie was candid, *“I think it will be very hard for the Taliban to act against Al Qaeda, to actually limit their ability to attack outside the country.”*

She quotes Bruce Hoffman, senior fellow for counter-terrorism at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of ‘Inside Terrorism.’ Hoffman was even more blunt: *“The situation is more dangerous in 2021 than it was in 1999 and 2000, we’re in a much-weakened position now.”*



Credit: seattletimes.com

The Taliban takeover is the biggest boost to Al Qaeda since 9/11 and a global game changer for jihadism.

Rita Katz, executive director of the Site Intelligence Group, a leading tracker of extremist activity worldwide, told Wright, *“There is a universal recognition that Al Qaeda can now reinvest in Afghanistan as a safe haven. Jihadism has a new homeland, the first since the collapse of the ISIS caliphate in March, 2019. It’s a boon for Al Qaeda and its franchises, which now stretch from Burkina Faso in West Africa to Bangladesh. Militants from across the world will now seek to enter Afghanistan’s porous borders.”*

On the morning of 26 August 2021, two explosions ripped through crowds waiting to at the Kabul airport. Scores of Afghans died along with 13 American soldiers; Hundreds more were injured. IS-K, the affiliate of Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the atrocity.

Islamic State operates a number of affiliates beyond Syria and Iraq. Its chapter in Afghanistan is known as IS-K, Islamic State-Khorasan, (Khorasan referring to a historical region encompassing parts of north-eastern Iran, much of Afghanistan and the southern parts of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). The antecedents of IS-K are murky, much of the group’s current leadership and troops come from the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), known as the Pakistani Taliban.

IS-K stressed the following in its official statement after the attack:

- Enmity towards the West, with the group celebrating the deaths of American soldiers.
- Denunciation of Taliban, for betraying the jihadist cause by working with the US through a diplomatic process.
- The Afghans wanting to leave the country were branded as ‘spies’ who had become apostates as a result.
- The ‘crusaders and their agents’ were warned that the Caliphate soldiers will fight them.

Cole Bunzel, Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, has analyzed the power struggle between al Qaeda and ISIS in Afghanistan under Taliban, in an article in the Foreign Affairs magazine issue of September 14, 2021.

For al Qaeda, Bunzel says, the Taliban’s victory is an epic triumph - the fulfillment of Allah’s promise to give victory to the believers over the non-believers; for ISIS, it is not a triumph at all, but further evidence of the willingness of the Taliban to collaborate with the Americans.

Both al Qaeda and ISIS face serious challenges in trying to re-establish themselves in Afghanistan. The return of the Taliban could create the biggest opportunity for al Qaeda to reconstitute and reorganize, but ISIS is unlikely to let it assume the leadership role. If the past is any guide, their future relationship is going to be bloody.



Credit: cnn.com

Thomas Friedman, the great American commentator on current affairs, conducted an imaginary interview with King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan in the New York Times of August 19, 2021 (Zahir Shah died on 23 July 2007).

Friedman asked the phantom of Zahir Shah the basic question: What do you think of Biden's decision to just quit Afghanistan and of the Taliban takeover? And, Thomas Freedman as Zahir Shah made the following points:

- Zahir Shah was seen as a unifying symbol by the 14 ethnic groups, the Taliban represent only the Pashtun Sunni Islamism.
- Afghan tribes have a saying: Me and my brother against my cousin. Me and my brother and my cousin against the outsider.
- The Taliban have no idea how to govern a modern country.
- The American occupation was to Afghanistan what oil is to Saudi Arabia. Now that the US is gone, how are the Taliban going to replace it? You can smuggle only so many drugs to Europe. Sure, the Chinese will throw them some crumbs to keep them away from the Uyghurs.
- The Taliban have to form a national unity government with all the major ethnic and tribal groups.
- If they don't and keep power to themselves, the country will resist it, the Taliban will crack and Afghanistan will explode. It will break up into different regions and hemorrhage refugees and instability. Afghanistan then will be a huge problem for its neighbors, particularly Pakistan, China, Russia and Iran.



Credit: en.iiss.pku.edu.cn

Robert Blackwill (former U.S. Ambassador to India, National Security Adviser and Henry Kissinger Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations) wrote an extraordinarily prescient article 'A De facto Partition for Afghanistan,' in Politico magazine on 7th July 2010 and expanded it for the January-February 2011 issue of Foreign Affairs titled, 'Plan B in Afghanistan: Why a De Facto Partition Is the Least Bad Option'.

He based his argument for Afghanistan's partition on:

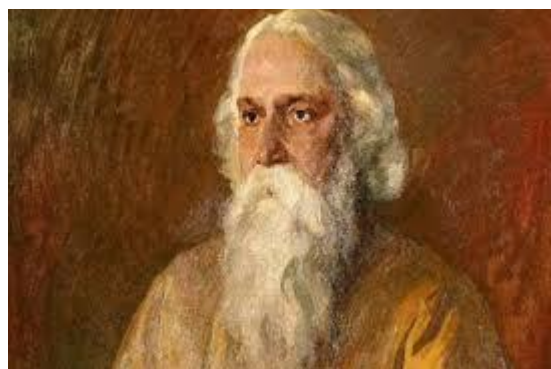
- The Obama administration's counter-insurgency strategy was headed for failure.
- The Karzai government was extremely corrupt and deeply unpopular, just like the Taliban.
- Afghanistan's lack of experience of a central authority would make nation-building efforts difficult.
- The Afghan Army will not defeat the Taliban for many years, if ever.
- Pakistan will not accept a truly independent Afghanistan.
- The Taliban will control most of the Pashtun south.
- Washington can and should safeguard the North and the West Afghanistan from Jihadi extremism.

He was clear that De facto partition was not best, but the least bad outcome, one the US could achieve, consistent with its vital national interests and domestic politics. He was clear that after years of faulty U.S. policy, there were no quick, easy and inexpensive ways to escape the deadly quagmire. The de facto partition offered the best alternative to a strategic defeat.

Blackwill was clear-eyed about the challenges:

- The Taliban would not accept status quo and would continue to test the US resolve.
- Pakistan would oppose de facto partition.
- Human rights in the Taliban-controlled areas would suffer.
- Putting together a coalition to implement this strategy would be a challenge.

He concluded that even with all these challenges, it was better to accept de facto partition, rather than persist with the failed strategy which might end up *'in a disastrous U.S. military withdrawal.'*



Credit: firstpost.com

Is there really no hope at all for the millions of poor Afghan people, especially, the women and the children?

Rabindranath Tagore said, *“Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark.”*

Afghanistan is passing through one of the darkest periods in its history. The immediate prospects are gloomy and fraught with danger. Given the bloody record of the three main actors: the Taliban, al Qaida and ISIS-K, only an incorrigible fool or an unadulterated optimist will hold out hope for peace and happiness for the Afghan people, especially, the women and the children.

But here is a Peace Plan that might just fly:

- Afghanistan should be made a UN mandated territory for at least five years.
- The mandate should be exercised by Expanded Security Council (US, China, UK, Russia, France, India, Japan and Brazil).
- The focus should be on re-building Afghanistan.
- Afghans living abroad should be invited to participate.
- All forces must be disarmed.
- The United Nations Peace-keeping Force (UNPF) of at least 50000 troops should be formed.
- It should be led by either Japan or India or Brazil.
- Afghanistan Re-building Fund should be set up with a corpus of \$25 billion to be used only for nation-building with emphasis on agriculture, education, health and support activities.
- Afghanistan funds held by the US, IMF etc. (approximately \$10 billion) should be released only for food, health and education.
- The UNPF should be assisted by a National Council made up of nominees from Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks. Half the representation must be given to women.
- Similar Councils should be set up in all 34 provinces, with representation of all ethnic groups in the provinces with 50% representation to women.
- Elections should be held at the end of the five years' mandate on the basis of universal adult franchise, supervised by the UNPF.

Will the Peace Plan fly?

Afghans love to fly kites.

They just might like to fly this kite!



Credit: [hobbylark.com](http://hobbylark.com)

\*

Lebanon: Paris doesn't live here anymore

## Lebanon: Paris doesn't live here anymore

\*

*The Good God and the Evil God met on the mountain top.*

*The Good God said,*

*“Good day to you, brother.”*

*The Evil God did not answer.*

*And the Good God said,*

*“You are in a bad humor today.”*

*“Yes,” said the Evil God.*

*“For of late, I have been often mistaken for you,*

*Called by your name, and treated as if I were you,*

*And it ill-pleases me.”*

*And the Good God said,*

*“But I too have been mistaken for you and called by your name.”*

*The Evil God walked away cursing the stupidity of man.*

Khalil Gibran

The Good God and the Evil God



Credit: thedailybeast.com

In 1960's, Lebanon was known as the '*Switzerland of the East*' and Beirut as the '*Paris of the Middle East*'.

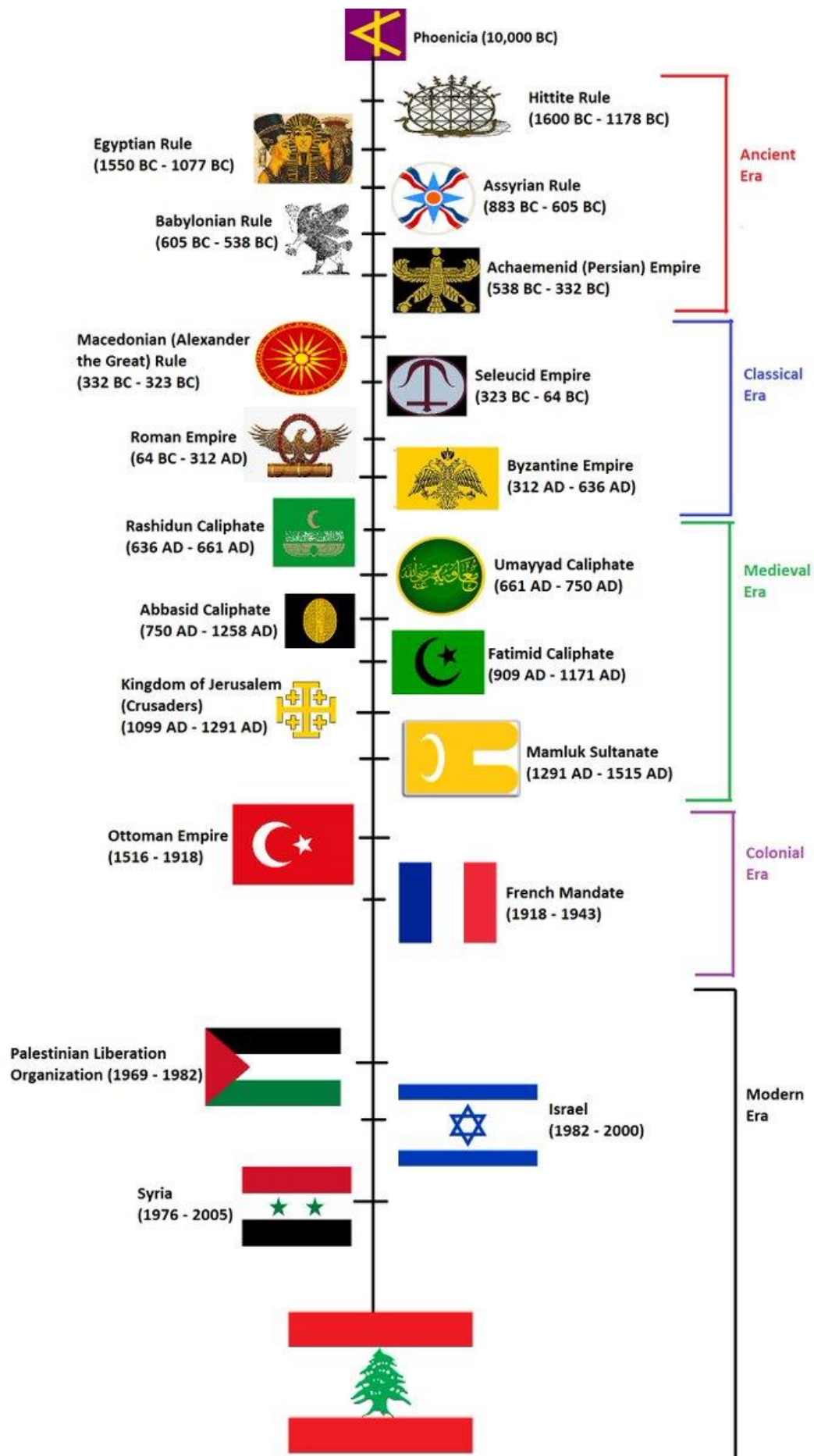
Today, in the words of Henri Chaoul, former advisor to the Government of Lebanon, "*Lebanon is on a train to hell and is about to reach the last station soon.*"

Khalil Gibran, the third best-selling poet after Shakespeare and Lao-tzu, perhaps gave the answer in his poem: The Good God gave everything to Lebanon and the Evil God took it all away!



Lebanon is bordered by Syria to the North and East and Israel to the South. It's a small country of about 4000 sq. miles and eight million people (two million refugees). Despite its small size, it has punched above its weight. It was a founding member of the United Nations in 1945.

A country's geography shapes its political economy and history. Akhil Amar of Yale University, in his book, *The Law of the Land: a Grand Tour of Our Constitutional Republic*, has explained how American landscape has influenced its politics, history and law. This is equally true of Lebanon.

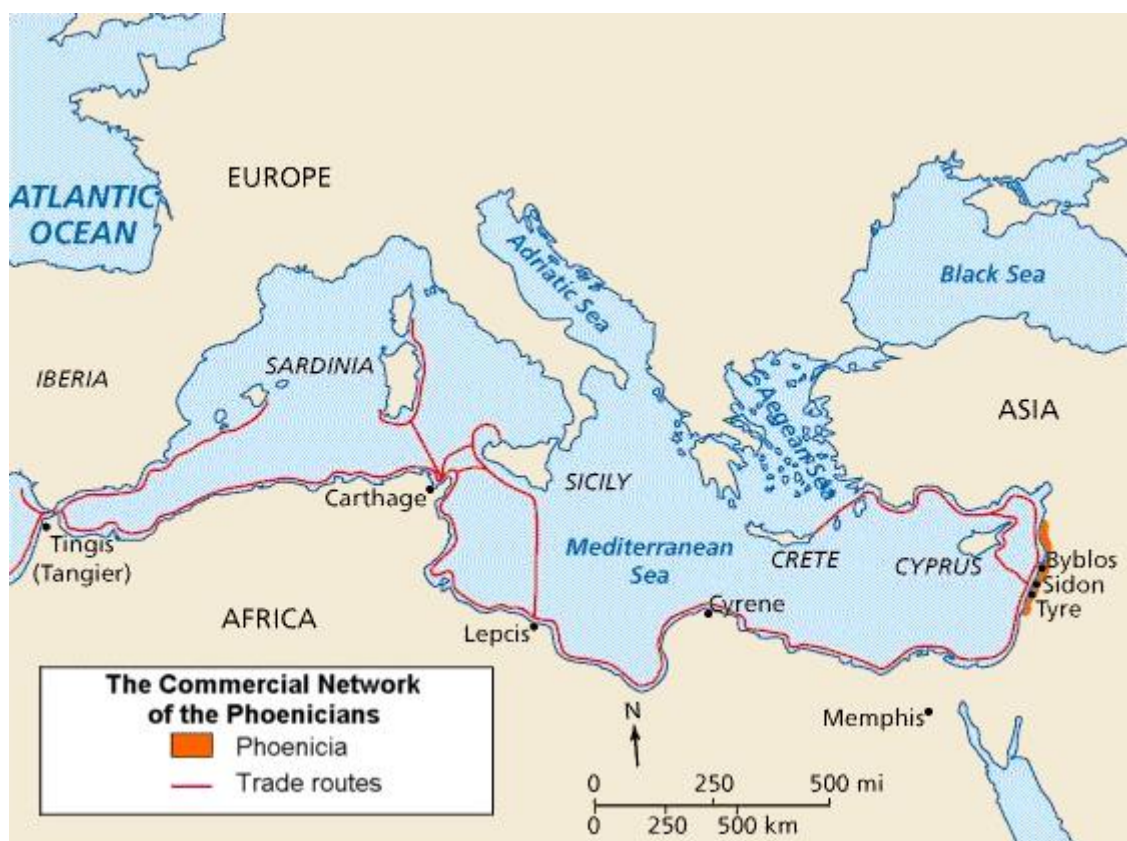


## Empires in Lebanon

Empire	Period
Canaan-Phoenicia	2500-0333 BC
Hittite	1600-1178 BC
Egyptian	1150-1077 BC
Assyrian	883-605 BC
Babylonian	605-538 BC
Persian	538 BC-332 CE
Greek	332-64 CE
Roman	64 BC – 646 CE
Rashidun	636-661
Umayyad	661-750
Abbasid	750-1258
Jerusalem	1099-1291
Mamluk	1291-1515
Ottoman	1516-1918

## The Ancient Era

Phoenicia was an ancient maritime civilization originating in the Levant region of the eastern Mediterranean, primarily located in modern Lebanon. 'Levant' is a geographical term that refers to Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and parts of Turkey; in a broad sense, it covers Egypt, Greece, Iraq and Libya. The term entered English language in the 15th century from French-Italian; '*Levante*' meaning 'rising', as in 'rising of the Sun'.



Map of Phoenicia and its Mediterranean trade routes

The Phoenicians were a Semitic-speaking people of somewhat unknown origin who emerged in the Levant around 3000 BC. The main Semitic languages are: Arabic, Amharic, Hebrew and Aramaic.

The term Phoenicia is an ancient Greek name that described one of their famous exports, a dye also known as Tyrian purple. Professor Robert Drews of Vanderbilt University believes the term 'Canaanites' (people living in the area known as Canaan), corresponds to the ethnic group 'Phoenicians'.

The Phoenicians came to prominence in the mid-12th century BC, and they were renowned as skilled traders and mariners, becoming the dominant commercial

power for much of classical antiquity. They developed an expansive maritime trade network that lasted over a millennium, helping facilitate the exchange of cultures, ideas, and knowledge between major civilizations such as Greece, Egypt, and Mesopotamia.

The Phoenicians were organized in city-states, similar to those of ancient Greece, of which the most notable were Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos. Each city-state was politically independent, but they did not consider themselves as one people.

In absence of written records, they were long considered a lost civilization and only around the mid-20th century the historians have realized what a developed civilization it was. Their legacy is the world's oldest verified alphabet, which was used to develop the Greek alphabet and the Latin script. They are also credited with innovations in shipbuilding, navigation, industry, agriculture, and government. Their international trade network is believed to have fostered the economic, political, and cultural foundations of Classical Western civilization.



Cadmus Asks the Delphic Oracle Where He Can Find his sister, Europa

Credit: artsandculture.google.com

According to the Greek legend, Cadmus, Prince of Tyre, brought the alphabet with him to Greece in his search for his abducted sister Europa. Cadmus is thought to

have settled in Greece and founds the city of Thebes. According to Herodotus, the father of history, the Greeks originally shaped their letters exactly like all other Phoenicians and in course of time, changed their language.

After their gradual decline, the Phoenician city-states on the Lebanese coast were conquered in 539 BC by Persia under Cyrus the Great (559–529 BC). Under Darius the Great (521–486 BC), the area comprising Phoenicia, Palestine, Syria, and Cyprus was administered in a single satrapy.

After two centuries of Persian rule, the Macedonian ruler Alexander the Great, during his war against Persia, attacked and burned Tyre, the most prominent Phoenician city. He conquered the area known now as Lebanon and other nearby regions in 332 BC.



Alexander the Great July 356 BC - June 323 BC

Credit: soundcloud.com

Christianity was introduced to Lebanon from neighboring Galilee, in the 1st century. The region, as with the rest of Syria and much of Anatolia (Greek ‘east’), became a major center of Christianity. In the 4th century it was incorporated into the Christian Byzantine Empire. Mount Lebanon and its coastal plain became part of the Diocese of the East.

During the late 4th and early 5th centuries, a hermit named Maron (‘maron’ or ‘marun’ in Syriac mean ‘small lord’), established a monastic tradition, focused on the importance of monotheism and asceticism, near the mountain range of Mount Lebanon. The monks who followed Maron spread his teachings among the native Lebanese Christians and remaining pagans in the mountains and coast of Lebanon. These Lebanese Christians came to be known as Maronites, and moved into the mountains to avoid religious persecution by Roman authorities.



St. Maron, (Born mid-4<sup>th</sup> century AD-Died 410), Credit: saintmaron-clev.org



Tanakh - Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Credit: mahj.org

The name 'Lebanon' occurs about 70 times in the Hebrew Bible, Tanakh. Christians in the region viewed Lebanon as the place for refuge when subjected to harsh Roman rule. Today, in Lebanon, there are twelve versions of Christianity: Christian denominations among Lebanese people: Maronite Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Protestant, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic,

Latin Catholic, Assyrian, Syriac Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Chaldean Catholic and Coptic Orthodox.

Lebanon was largely Christian until the 17th century.

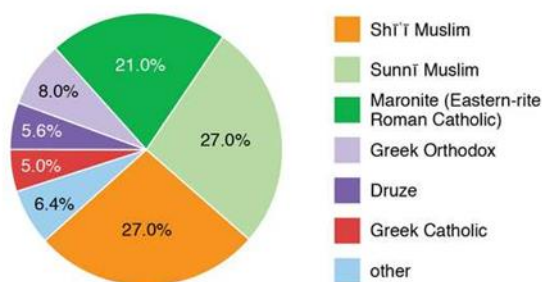
The French considered the Maronites as the 'Eastern Catholics' and saw their church as the 'eldest daughter of the Church', and regarded it as their sacred duty to protect the Maronite church!

France therefore, intervened in 1860 to protect the Christians when the Civil War broke out between the Maronites and the Druze and on his first visit to France in 1980, Pope John Paul II roused his audience: *"France, fille aînée de l'Église, es-tu fidèle aux promesses de ton baptême?"* ("France, the eldest daughter of the Church, are you faithful to your baptismal promises?")



Pope John Paul II, Credit: dphx.org

Religious affiliation (2012)



## The Middle Ages

During the 7th century A D the Muslim Arabs conquered Syria soon after the death of Muhammad, establishing a new regime to replace the Romans (or the

Byzantines). Though Islam and the Arabic language were officially dominant under this new regime, the general populace took time to convert from Christianity and the Syriac language. In particular, the Maronite community clung to its faith and

managed to maintain a large degree of autonomy despite the succession of Muslim rulers over Syria. Muslim influence increased greatly in the seventh century, when the Umayyad capital was established in Damascus.

During the 11th century the Druze faith emerged from a branch of Islam. They are members of an Arabic-speaking, ethno-religious group which originated in West Asia. Druzism, is an Abrahamic, monotheistic and ethnic religion based on the teachings of Hamza ibn Ali ibn Ahmad and the sixth Fatimid caliph, al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah. Adherents of the Druze religion are called The People of Monotheism.



al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, Credit: wikisource.org

Following the fall of Roman/Christian Anatolia (Turkey, Armenia and Mesopotamia region) to the Muslim Turks of the Seljuk Empire in the 11th century, the Romans in Constantinople appealed to the Pope in Rome for assistance. There resulted a series of wars known as the Crusades, launched by Latin Christians (of mainly French origin) in Western Europe to reclaim the former Roman territories in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially Syria and Palestine. Lebanon stood in the main path of the First Crusade's advance on Jerusalem from Anatolia. Frankish nobles occupied areas within present-day Lebanon as part of the south-eastern Crusader States. The southern half of present-day Lebanon formed the northern march of the Kingdom of Jerusalem

(founded in 1099); the northern half became the heartland of the County of Tripoli (founded in 1109). Although Saladin eliminated Christian control of the Holy Land around 1190, the Crusader states of Lebanon and Syria were better defended.



Europe on the eve of the First Crusade (1092)

The Crusades were a series of religious wars initiated, supported, and sometimes directed by the Latin Church in the medieval period. The best known of these Crusades are those to the Holy Land in the period between 1095 and 1291 that were intended to recover Jerusalem and its surrounding area from the Islamic rule. Concurrent military activities in the Iberian Peninsula against the Moors (the *Reconquista*) and in northern Europe against pagan Slavic tribes (the Northern Crusades) also became known as crusades.

In 1095, Pope Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont. He encouraged military support for Byzantine emperor Alexios I against the Seljuk Turks and called for an armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Across all social strata in western Europe, there was an enthusiastic popular response. The first Crusaders

had a variety of motivations, including religious salvation, satisfying feudal obligations, opportunities for renown, and economic or political advantage. Later crusades were generally conducted by more organized armies, sometimes led by a king. All were granted papal indulgences. Initial successes established four Crusader states: the County of Edessa; the Principality of Antioch; the Kingdom of Jerusalem; and the County of Tripoli. The Crusader presence remained in the region in some form until the fall of Acre in 1291. After this, there were no further crusades to recover the Holy Land.



Pope Urban II, Credit: biographyonline.net

Proclaimed a crusade in 1123, the struggle between the Christians and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula was called the *Reconquista* by Christians, and only ended in 1492 with the fall of the Muslim Emirate of Granada. From 1147 campaigns in Northern Europe against pagan tribes were considered crusades. In 1199 Pope Innocent III began the practice of proclaiming political crusades against Christian heretics. From the mid-14th century, crusading rhetoric was used in response to the rise of the Ottoman Empire, only ending in 1699 with the War of the Holy League.



One of the most lasting effects of the Crusades in this region was the contact between the crusaders (mainly French) and the Maronites. Unlike most other Christian communities in the region, who swore allegiance to Constantinople or other local patriarchs, the Maronites proclaimed allegiance to the Pope in Rome. As such the Franks saw them as Roman Catholic brethren. These initial contacts led to centuries of support for the Maronites from France and Italy, even after the fall of the Crusader states in the region.



Uthman, the Sultan of Asia Minor, Credit: nationalgeographic.com

The word 'Ottoman' has Italian-French root (*Ottomano*), but its origin is Arabic, from 'Uthman', or 'Othman'. In 1301, Uthman overthrew the Seljuk aristocracy and proclaimed himself the Sultan of Asia Minor. The Ottoman Empire replaced the Byzantine Empire; it reached its zenith under Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-66); its borders included Turkey, Egypt, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Hungary, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, parts of Arabia and much of the coastal strip of North Africa.

To defend the Empire, the Ottoman Sultans formed the Order of the Janissaries, an infantry formation of slaves and Christian converts. Constantinople became Istanbul, the 'City of Islam' in 1453 upon its capture by Sultan Mehmet II. When Sultan Mehmet II rode on a white horse into Constantinople in 1453, the Christian Europe was traumatized. Pope Pius II called for a crusade to recapture Constantinople, but could not raise an army.

The Ottoman Sultan, Selim I (1516–20), invaded Syria-Lebanon in 1516. The Ottomans, through the Maans, the prominent Druze feudal family, and the Shihabs, the Sunni Muslim family that converted to Christianity, ruled Lebanon until the middle of the nineteenth century.



Sultan Mehmet II (1444 -1446, and 1451-1481), Credit: wikipedia.org



Ottoman Sultan, Selim I (1516–20), Credit: wikipedia.org



On 3rd September 1840, the Sultan appointed Bashir III the Amir of Mount Lebanon, the central part of Lebanon, which historically had a Christian majority. As he was not able to control the fighting between the Maronite Christians and the Druze, the Sultan deposed him on 13th January 1842 and appointed Omar Pasha as Governor.



Omar Pasha, Credit: wikipedia.org

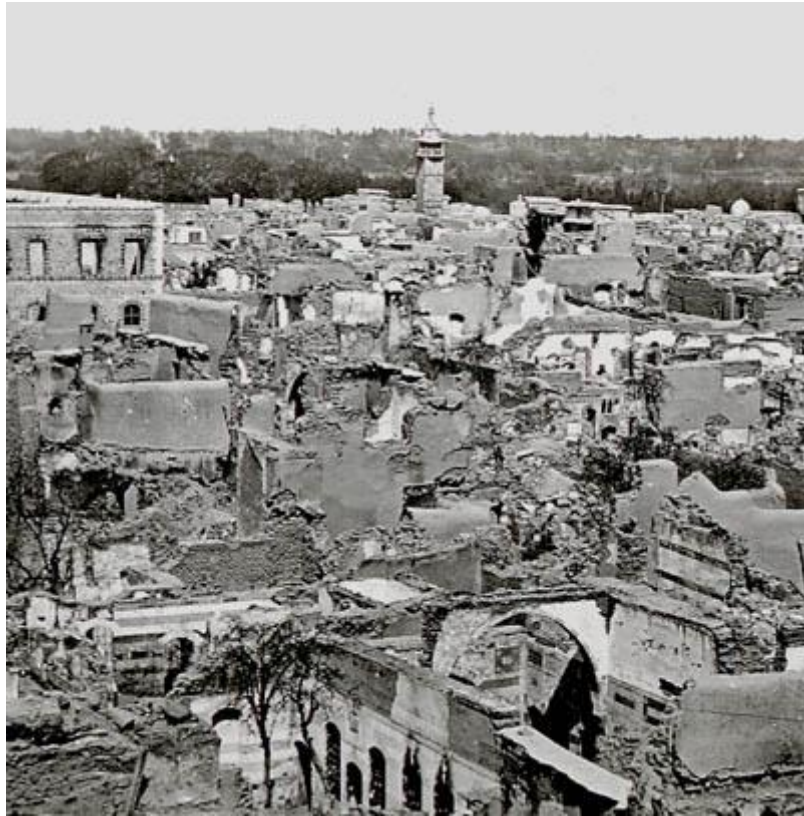
The contest between the Maronite Christians and the Druze in Mount Lebanon was an invitation to France and Britain to form alliances. The Maronite and the Druze communities while subordinating themselves to the House of Osman, considered France and Britain to be their protectors. Soon, France and Britain proposed to the Sultan that the area be split between the Maronite and the Druze.

On 7th December 1842, the Sultan accepted the proposal and divided Mount Lebanon, into two districts: the Northern district under Christian Deputy Governor and the Southern district under Druze Deputy Governor, responsible to the Ottoman Governor in Beirut.

The tensions continued, because segments of the Druze population lived in the Maronite district and sections of the Maronites lived in the Druze territory. Both fought for dominance in Mount Lebanon, with the French supporting the Maronites and the British supporting the Druze, delighting the Governor.

The civil conflict of 1860 in Mount Lebanon started on 27th May 1860 and ended sometime in October 1860; between 10000 and 20000 people were killed.

James Lewis Farley in his letter published in the English Daily News in July 1860 gave the following count of destruction: 326 villages, 560 churches, 28 schools and seminaries, 42 convents, and 9 religious establishments.



Glass-photo, ca 1860, of the destruction of the Christian Quarter in Damascus in 1860.

Credit: alami.com

On 9th of July, a mob of about 50,000 killed 12,000 inhabitants of the Christian Quarter. The Greek Orthodox, the Greek Catholic and the Armenian churches were the first to be burned. The Russian consulate was the first to be attacked, followed by the French, the Dutch, Austrian, Belgian and the American consulates. The American Consul was beaten and left for dead.

Col. Charles Churchill, resident of Lebanon-Syria, recorded in his book, 'The Druze and the Maronites under the Turkish Rule from 1840 to 1860' that 11,000 were killed, 100,000 were made refugees and 20,000 became widows or orphans.



On previous page, Algerian Emir Abdelkader El Djezairi rescuing Christians from death during the July 1860 anti-Christian riots in Damascus, Credit: emir-stein.org



French expeditionary corps led by General Beaufort d'Hautpoul, in Beirut on 16 August 1860.,

Credit: wikipediacommons.com

On 5th October 1860, an International Commission composed of France, Britain, Austria, Prussia, and the Ottoman Empire met to investigate causes of the conflict and to devise a new administrative and judicial system to prevent recurrence.

The Commission concluded that the 1842 partition of Mount Lebanon was the main cause for the massacre. In the Statute of 1861 therefore, Mount Lebanon was separated from Syria and reunited under a non-Lebanese Christian Governor to be appointed by the Sultan, with the approval of the European powers. The Governor was to be assisted by a Council of twelve members from the various religious communities of Lebanon.

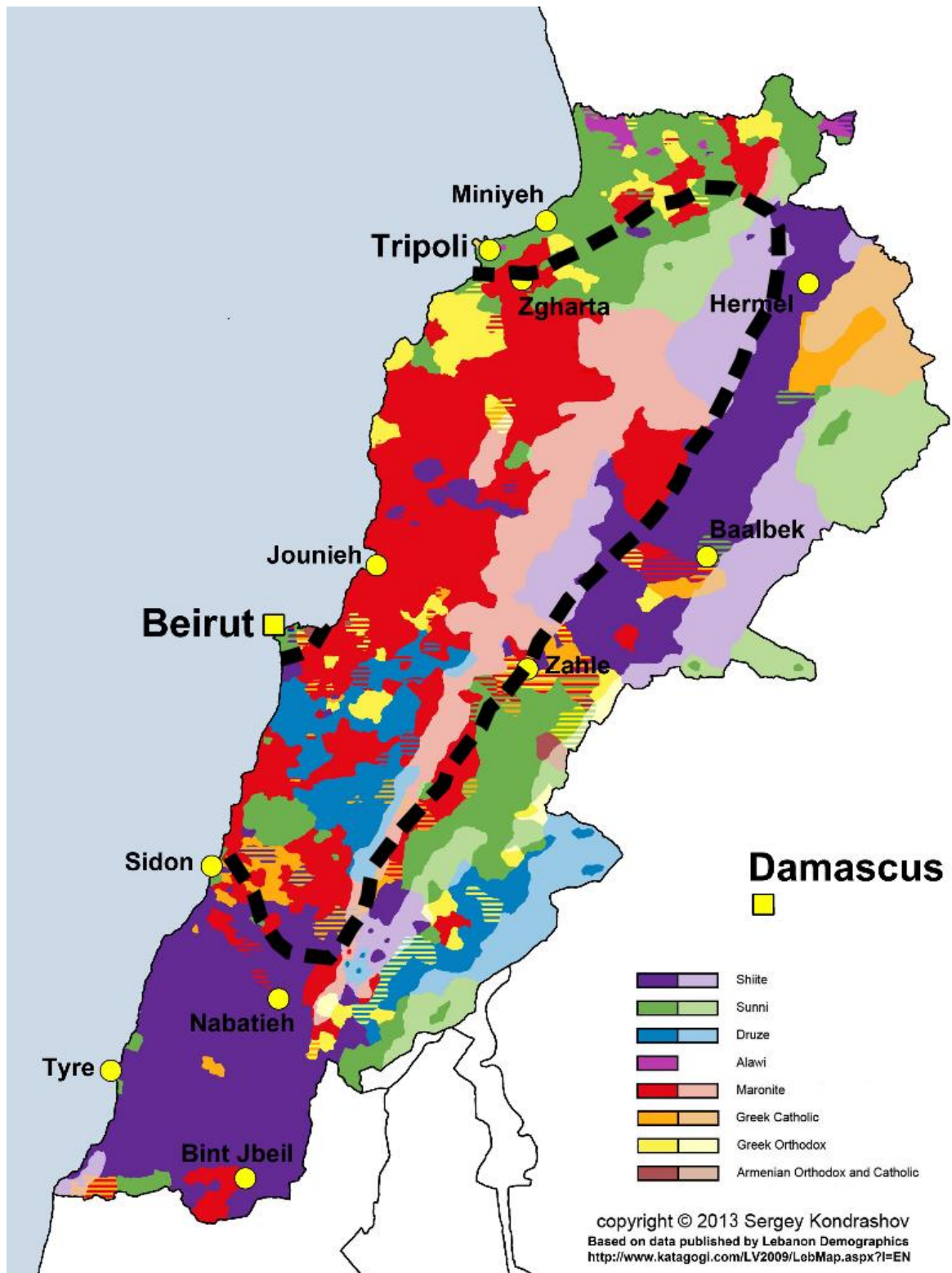
In the second half of the 19th century, European Empires expanded frenetically; so, did Beirut. France strengthened its position as the 'protector' of Arab Christians and the Maronites were at the center of this enterprise.

The League of Nations gave the mandate to France for Syria and Lebanon in the aftermath of the First World War and the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire. The mandate system was supposed to differ from colonialism, with the governing country intended to act as a trustee until the inhabitants were considered eligible for self-government. Then the mandate would terminate and an independent state would be born.



Previous page, Map showing the states of the French Mandate from 1921 to 1922

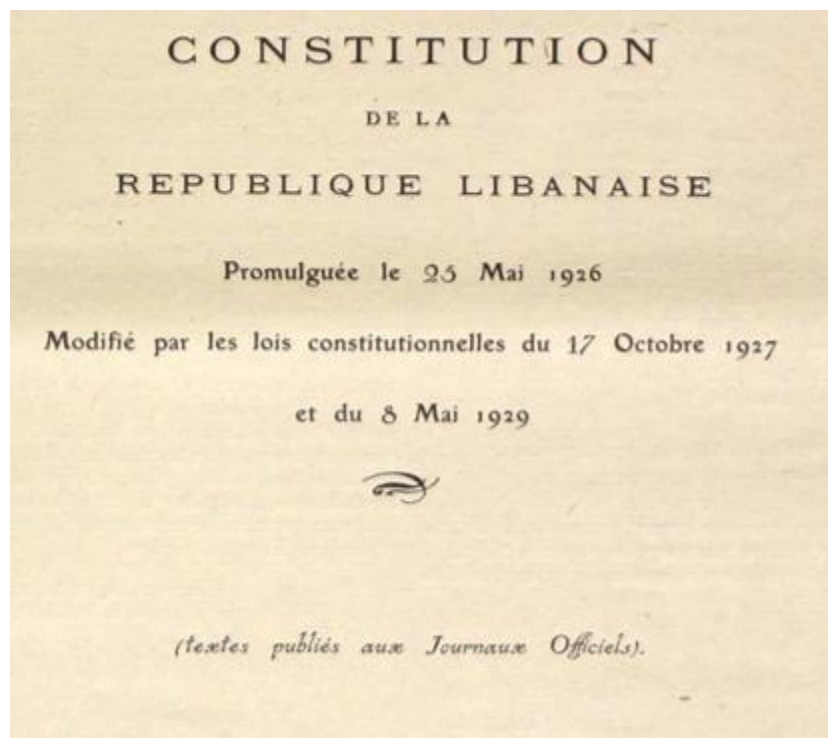
In 1923 the League of Nations formally gave the class 'A' mandate for Lebanon and Syria to France.



Map of Greater Lebanon's borders

The Maronites, strongly pro-French, welcomed this, and during the next 20 years of the mandate, the Maronites were favored. The expansion of prewar Lebanon into Greater Lebanon, however, changed the balance of the population. The Maronites were the largest single segment of the population, without majority.

The Lebanese population was more or less equally divided between Christians and Muslims and a large section of Muslims did not want to be ruled by France and wanted to be part of a larger Syrian or Arab state. To ease tensions between the communities, the constitution of 1926 provided that each should be equitably represented in public offices. Thus, by convention the president of the republic was normally a Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the chamber a Shi'i Muslim.



Constitution of the Lebanese Republic, Credit: wikipedia.org

The mandate placed on France the responsibility of creating and controlling a system of administration, of developing the resources of the country, and of preparing it for self-government. The French mandatory administration carried out much constructive work. Roads were built; town planning was started and urban amenities were improved; land reforms were initiated and measures to improve agriculture were introduced.

Following the end of World War II on May 8, 1945 in Europe, the French mandate may be said to have ended without any formal action on the part of the League of Nations or its successor the United Nations. The mandate was ended by the declaration of the mandatory power and of the new states themselves, of their independence, followed by a process of piecemeal unconditional recognition by other powers, culminating in formal admission to the United Nations. Article 78 of the UN Charter ended the status of tutelage for any member state: *'The trusteeship system shall not apply to territories which have become Members of the United Nations, relationship among which shall be based on respect for the principle of sovereign equality.'* So, when the UN officially came into existence on 24 October 1945, after ratification of the United Nations Charter by the five permanent members, as Lebanon was a founding member state, the French mandate was legally terminated on that date and full independence attained. The last French troops withdrew in December 1946.

#### Lebanon Demographics (%)

Year	Muslim	Christian
1932	42	51
1985	75	25
2010	54	41
2017	48	46

In 1932, the Lebanese Government under French mandate conducted a census that ultimately determined political representation within the Lebanese government after acquiring independence through the national pact. The census served not only to discover the proportion of different religions within Lebanon, but also ultimately determining the ratios within the government. Because the results of the census demonstrated a Maronite Christian majority of 51%, the National Pact then

set in place the requirements of a Maronite Christian always holding the presidency and the parliament having a 6:5 ratio in favor of Christians as well.

Controversy arose in response to the census. The critics felt that the census did not precisely define a Lebanese citizen and worked off a definition created and used by the Ottoman Empire defining it as 'having been present in Lebanon during August 1924', the last time when it would have been recorded. Because of this, it was argued that the census was biased and that it was created with the intention of maintaining Lebanon as a Christian nation to maintain the power of the elites.

This became increasingly important as the 1932 Lebanese census became the basis for the creation of all of the ratios defined within the national pact, perpetuating power of the Maronite Christians within the government in Lebanon. Because Maronite Christians were closely aligned with the French government and their interests in Lebanon, many feared that their subsequent power and the assurance of independence was done with an eye on protecting the French interests.

The National Pact of 1943, was an unwritten gentlemen's agreement between President Bishara al-Khuri (Maronite Christian) and Prime Minister Riad Al Solh (Sunni Muslim) to protect the interests of the political elites.



Bishara al-Khuri



Riad Al Solh

Credit: Wikipedia.org

Key points of the agreement were:

- Maronite Christians not seek Western intervention, and accept that Lebanon had Arab features
- Muslims shall abandon their aspiration to unite with Syria
- The President of the Republic and the Commander of the Armed Forces will always be Maronite Christian
- The Prime Minister of the Republic will always be a Sunni Muslim
- The Speaker of the Parliament will always be a Shia Muslim
- The Deputy Speaker of the Parliament and the Deputy Prime Minister will always be Greek Orthodox Christian
- The Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces will always be a Druze
- There will always be a ratio of 6:5 between Christians and Muslims (including Druze) in the Parliament.



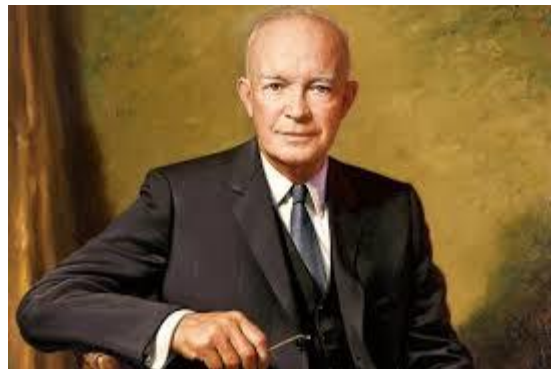
Credit: the961.com

The National Pact also attempted to advance the idea of the distinctiveness of the Lebanese people by adopting a 'neither Arab, nor Western' concept stressing that Lebanon would neither seek unity with the Arab world nor special relations with the West.

In May 1948, however, Lebanon supported Arab countries in their war against Israel. As a result, 100,000 Palestinians came to Lebanon as refugees. After the armistice in 1949, Israel refused to let them return.

After the Suez Crisis of 1956, there was great increase in Arab hostility to the U.S. and overwhelming support to the Soviet Union in Egypt and Syria. President Gamal Abdel Nasser became the idol of the Arab masses, especially of the poor and the youth and the U.S. feared that the region would come under the influence of Communism.

The Eisenhower Doctrine was announced in January 1957. It pledged American economic and military aid to the nations of the Middle East considered vulnerable to Communism. The U. S. Congress passed the doctrine on 7th March 1957.



US President Eisenhower, Credit: youtube.com

Camille Chamoun was elected the second President of Lebanon in 1952 for a six-year term, aided by the U. S. government's \$12.7 million aid and help from the CIA in distributing 'campaign contributions' to the pro-U. S. politicians. Fifty-three out of the sixty-six parliamentarians supported Chamoun.



Camille Chamoun, Credit: middleeast.in-24.com

On 1st February 1958, Egypt and Syria formed the United Arab Republic (U.A.R.). Emboldened, Nasser began to issue calls for Arab unity creating panic among

neighbors. The Lebanese government complained to the UN Security Council on 22nd May 1958, accusing the U.A.R. of ‘interference’ in its affairs.

President Eisenhower authorized ‘Operation Blue Bat’ on 15th July 1958. The goal of the operation was to strengthen the Chamoun government to confidently face internal opposition as well as threats from Syria and Egypt.



Operation Blue Bat, Credit: digitalcombatsimulator.com

The plan was to occupy and secure Beirut International Airport and the seaport along with the main approaches to the city. The operation involved more than 14,000 troops, supported by a fleet of 70 ships with 40,000 sailors.

Eisenhower sent Robert Murphy (who later advised Nixon, Kennedy, Johnson and Ford, as well) to Lebanon as his representative. Murphy convinced both sides to reach a compromise by electing the moderate Christian General Fouad Chehab as President on the completion of Chamoun’s Term on 22nd September 1958. The U.S. forces were withdrawn on 25th October 1958.



General Fouad Chehab, Credit: monthlymagazine.com

The Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) had its origin in the conflicts of the post-Ottoman period, exacerbated by alarming demographic trends, inter-faith strife and the tensions among Syria, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and Israel.

It is estimated that during the 16-year War, more than 100,000 people died and another 100,000 suffered serious injuries; almost a million people were displaced.

The Civil War can be divided into six phases:

- Initial outbreak mid-1970's
- Syrian and Israeli intervention in late 1970's
- Escalation of the PLO-Israeli conflict early 1980's
- 1982 Israeli invasion
- Multinational involvement and
- Formalization of Syrian occupation.

The 1978 South Lebanon conflict was invasion of Lebanon by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in response to the Coastal Road massacre of 15th March 1978, in which 38 Israelis, including 13 children, were killed and 71 wounded. The UN Security Council on 19th March 1978 called for immediate Israeli withdrawal and deployed the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to maintain peace. Israeli forces withdrew later in 1978, leaving its ally, the Lebanese Christian South Lebanon Army (SLA) to control the border.

The 1982 Lebanon War began on 6th June 1982, when the IDF invaded Southern Lebanon, to put an end to the repeated attacks by the PLO. After defeating the PLO (and the Syrian, Leftist, and Muslim Lebanese forces supporting it), the Israeli forces, along with their Maronite allies and the South Lebanon Army, occupied Southern Lebanon, surrounding the PLO and the Syrian Army. In June 1982, under the peace agreement negotiated by the U. S. Envoy Philip Habib, the PLO relocated its headquarters to Tripoli, north of Beirut.

Combat returned to Beirut in 1987, with the Palestinians, Leftists and Druze fighters allied against Amal, the Lebanese Shia political party. After winning the battle, the Druze-backed Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) controlled West Beirut. The Syrians then entered Beirut and violence broke out again in 1988 between Amal and Hezbollah.

President Gemayel's term expired in September 1988. Before stepping down, he appointed Armed Forces Commander General Michel Aoun (also, Maronite Christian), as acting Prime Minister. This action, was rejected by the Muslim

groups who pledged support to Selim al-Hoss, a Sunni who had succeeded Rashid Karami. In 1989 two rival governments were formed in Lebanon: a military one under General Michel Aoun in East Beirut and a civilian one under Selim el-Hoss based in West Beirut, supported by the Syrians.



Bachir Gemayel, Credit: [historica.fandom.com](http://historica.fandom.com)



Michel Aoun, Credit: [lebarmy.gov.lb](http://lebarmy.gov.lb)



The Taif Agreement of 1989 ended the civil war, re-apportioning the seats in the Parliament to provide for equal representation of Christians and Muslims, with each to elect 64 of the 128 deputies.

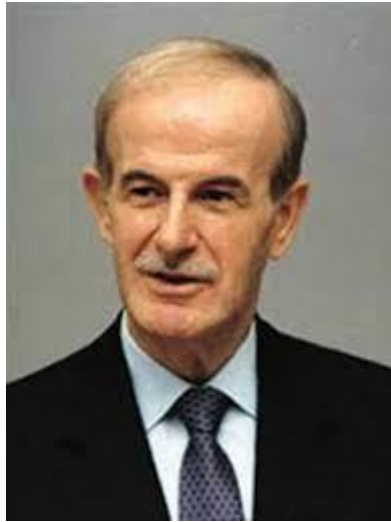
#### Lebanese Parliament Seat Allocation

Confession	Before Taif	After Taif
<a href="#">Maronite Catholic</a>	30	34
<a href="#">Eastern Orthodox</a>	11	14
<a href="#">Melkite Catholic</a>	6	8
<a href="#">Armenian Orthodox</a>	4	5
<a href="#">Armenian Catholic</a>	1	1
<a href="#">Protestant</a>	1	1
<a href="#">Other Christian Minorities</a>	1	1
Total Christians	54	64
<a href="#">Sunni</a>	20	27
<a href="#">Shi'ite</a>	19	27
<a href="#">Alawite</a>	0	2
<a href="#">Druze</a>	6	8
Total Muslims + Druze	45	64
Total	99	128

Unhappy with the Taif agreement, since it did not provide a deadline for the withdrawal of Syrian troops, General Aoun launched the 'War of liberation' in February 1989 against the Syrian Armed Forces in Lebanon. In October 1990, the Syrian Air Force, backed by the pro-Syrian Lebanese groups attacked the Presidential Palace and forced Aoun to go into exile in Paris.

In May 1991, the Treaty of 'Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination', was signed by President Elias Hrawi of Lebanon and President Hafez al-Assad of Syria, legitimizing the Syrian military presence. It stipulated that Lebanon would not

threaten Syria's security and that Syria would protect Lebanon from external threats.



Hafez al-Assad, Credit: wikipedia.org



Elias Hrawi, Credit: wikipedia.org

On 14th February 2005, former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafik Hariri was killed along with 21 others in an explosion in Beirut. Hariri had led the anti-Syrian opposition in Lebanon. His assassination triggered the ‘Cedar Revolution’, a civil, popular movement whose main goal was ending the 30-year long Syrian military occupation of Lebanon.



Rafik Hariri, Credit: the famouspeople.com

On 14th February 2005, former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafik Hariri was killed along with 21 others in an explosion in Beirut. Hariri had led the anti-Syrian opposition in Lebanon. His assassination triggered the 'Cedar Revolution', a civil, popular movement whose main goal was ending the 30-year long Syrian military occupation of Lebanon.

Additionally, the movement called for:

- The return of ex-Prime Minister Michel Aoun, in exile since 1991
- Ouster of the Pro-Syrian government of Omar Karami
- Identifying the killers of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri
- Organizing free parliamentary elections without Syrian interference
- Withdrawal of Syrian troops by April 2005.

*(Fifteen years later, in August 2020, the Special Tribunal found Salim Ayyash, a mid-level Hezbollah operative guilty of the murder of Hariri, in absentia. Hezbollah denied any involvement and its leader, Hassan Nasrallah refused to allow the arrest of Ayyash).*

The Cedar Revolution was a chain of demonstrations, especially in Beirut triggered by the assassination of the popular ex-Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri. The peaceful Cedar Revolution was successful and Syria agreed to withdraw its 14000 troops which had been stationed in Lebanon since 1976. The withdrawal was completed on 30th April 2005.

In May 1948, Lebanon had supported the neighboring Arab countries in their war against Israel. As a result, about 100,000 Palestinians came as refugees. After the armistice in 1949, Israel refused to let them return. The Six-Day War of 1967 also resulted in a large exodus of refugees into Lebanon.

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), there are now about half a million Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, living in appalling conditions in camps.

The National Pact of 1943, between the then President Bishara al-Khuri (Maronite Christian) and the Prime Minister Riad Al Solh (Sunni Muslim) was designed to protect the interests of the political elites. However, it soon unraveled because there was great discontent in the sections of the population that did not get a share in the power.

After analyzing the reasons for the unintended catastrophic results of the National Pact, Camille Habib, Dean of the Faculty of Law at Lebanese University, wrote a thoughtful essay, 'Lebanese Politics and the Tyranny of Confessionalism' in *Confluences Méditerranée* (2009/3) in which he made the following key points:

- Lebanon must begin the process of de-confessionalism, because confessional politics did not make room for competitors
- Confessionalism and consociationalism hindered the prospects of building a strong, unified state in Lebanon
- The dichotomy between the civil codes led to the fragmentation of the Lebanese society
- Proportional representation that guarantees fair representation was needed to unify the civil society
- Administrative decentralization was essential for development of all regions
- The State must reform itself to facilitate a culture of dialogue, democracy and peace among the Lebanese people.

Professor Habib was quick to concede: *"There is no solution to the Confessional problem in Lebanon. At the same time, without reforms, the 'terrible beauty' that Lebanon is, will become more terrible!"*

Lebanon is currently undergoing the most serious existential crisis in its troubled history.

The World Bank in its Report of June 2021 stated that Lebanon's financial crisis is one of the worst the world has seen in 150 years!

The huge explosion of August 4, 2020 has further compounded the misery of the unfortunate people. The explosion pulverized Beirut port and damaged more than half the city. The explosion resulted from the detonation of tons of ammonium nitrate, a combustible chemical compound commonly used in agriculture as a high-nitrate fertilizer, but which can also be used to manufacture explosives.

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) physicist Peter Goldstein has studied the water saturation of the explosive, ground and possibly water and debris from the near-source environment. His research, which appears in Countering WMD Journal, published by the US Army Nuclear and Countering WMD Agency, shows that all the data are consistent with a yield of around a kiloton when water/saturation is accounted for. *“Water in the near-source environment can have a significant effect on many observations, including crater formation, cloud rise, seismic magnitudes and blast wave effects,”* he said.

The explosion is estimated to have caused at least 218 deaths, 7,000 injuries, and US\$15 billion in property damage, and leaving an estimated 300,000 people homeless.



Credit: researchgate.net



Credit: Aljazeera.com

Since 2019, Lebanon has been facing serious challenges and the massive blast of 4th August 2020, broke the back of the economy.

Although more than a year has gone by, the accountability for the blast is yet to be fixed. Lynn Maalouf, Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Amnesty International says that the Lebanese authorities are blocking and stalling the investigation at every turn.



Leaked official documents indicate that the Lebanese authorities: customs, military and security, as well as the judiciary, had warned successive governments of the dangerous stockpile of explosive chemicals at the port on at least 10 occasions in the past six years, yet no action was taken. The President also stated that he had knowledge of the danger but had “left it to the port authorities to address it.” MPs and high officials have been claiming their right to immunity throughout the investigation. This tactic has been used repeatedly in a decades-long post-conflict amnesty, effectively shielding perpetrators of serious crimes under international law, and denying thousands of victims any form of justice.

On 10 December 2020, Judge Fadi Sawan, the first investigative judge appointed, charged former Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil, former Public Works ministers Youssef Fenianos and Ghazi Zeaiter, and caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab, with criminal ‘negligence.’ They all refused to appear before the judge. Diab called the decision a violation of the constitution. Zeaiter and Khalil went a step further

and filed a lawsuit to remove Judge Sawan from the investigation, citing immunity for MPs from criminal prosecution.

Judge Sawan suspended the investigation on 17 December 2020 for nearly two months. Shortly afterwards on 18 February 2021, Lebanon's Court of Cassation dismissed Judge Sawan. On 2 July 2021, the new judge assigned to the case, Judge Tarek Bitar, submitted a request to parliament to lift parliamentary immunity for MPs Khalil, Zeaiter and Machnouk, along with several other high-ranking officials.

In response, 26 MPs from the bloc supporting Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri: Amal Movement, Hezbollah, and Future Movement, signed a petition requesting the launch of a parallel proceedings in an attempt to avoid interrogation by Judge Bitar.

In a separate move, the Minister of Interior rejected a request by Judge Bitar to question the head of General Security, Abbas Ibrahim, one of the country's top generals. The judge is appealing the decision.

The crisis over the probe is rooted in one of Lebanon's main problems: sectarian politics that have divided Lebanese since independence. Shi'ites and Christians have lined up on opposite sides of this stand-off. Some of the most prominent suspects sought for questioning on suspicion of negligence are Shi'ite allies of the heavily armed, Iran-backed Shi'ite group Hezbollah.

The World Bank has projected the country's GDP to contract by 9.5% in 2021 to \$30 billion, after already having shrunk in 2020 to \$33 billion from \$36 billion in 2019 and from \$55 billion in 2018.

*"Such a brutal contraction is usually associated with Wars,"* the World Bank added.

For decades, Lebanese politics has been dominated by the same political elites (polite word for warlords) from the Civil War. Corruption has also been prevalent, but now, it has assumed deadly proportions, pushing the country to bankruptcy.

According to Lebanese author Rabih Alameddine: *"It's not bad apples, it's the whole orchard"*!

Reliable information on Lebanese economy is difficult to get. The government has always resorted to massive borrowings to finance its budget. The annual growth rate of gross debt between 1993 and 1995 was 123%, which went up to 171% between 1995-2000. The high debt has caused Lebanon to spend a large part of its revenue in debt servicing.

With debt piling up and growth being negligible or negative, Lebanon's debt to GDP ratio reached 178 percent by the end of 2019, which making it the third most indebted country in the world.



A woman with a single light in a dark and impoverished neighborhood, Credit: N Y Times



The gutted and abandoned interior of Jamal Trust Bank, Credit: N Y Times

A huge problem of the Lebanese economy is gross income disparity. The top 1% accounts for a quarter of the total national income. Lebanese billionaires' wealth between 2005 and 2016 represented, 20% of national income as opposed to 5% in France, and 10% in the U.S. It's got worse, since then.

Lebanon has no middle class, the continued economic crises have beggared it and pushed it below the poverty line. David Leonhardt and Sanam Yar wrote in the New York Times on October 15, 2021, *"Weekly grocery bills can equal months of a typical family's income. Banks are refusing to let people withdraw money. Basic medicines are often unavailable, and gas-station lines can last hours. Every day, many homes lack electricity."* For many, remittances from the family members abroad, is necessary for survival.

Since the end of the Civil War in 1990, Lebanon has largely been built on a political Ponzi scheme, Paul Salem, President of the Middle East Institute and son of a former foreign minister, told the Washington Post in August 2020. The state is *"grievously wounded, but is not dead yet"*. There are two alternatives, he said: civil society protests to push for reforms and new leadership; else, the 'criminal oligarchy' will stitch corrupt deals to continue its rule and ruin Lebanon. *"If nothing is done, we are headed to becoming a failed state,"* he concluded.



Riad Salameh, Credit: gfmag.com

The corrosive nature of corruption which has grievously wounded the Lebanese financial system can be seen from the way Riad Salameh, the Governor of the Central Bank of Lebanon (the longest-serving Central Bank Governor in the world) ran it for three decades. He has been called, 'The Wealthy Ruler of a Bankrupt Country'.

He was helped in his misrule by the enigmatic, young, beautiful Marianne Hoayek, (Maronite Christian).

In a candid interview with the British magazine *Bespoke*, Hoayek spoke about her special relationship with the Governor and told how even when she did not have even a master's degree, Salamé asked her, (an inexperienced 25-year-old with mediocre academic record) to restructure the entire Central Bank! Hoayek's tenure at the Banque Du Liban began in 2005 as an intern but she was given responsibilities of a Chief Executive Officer, or at least Chief Operations Officer!



Marianne Hoayek, Credit: officialbespoke.com

She was responsible for providing information to the two of the highest-level Committees of the Bank: the Investment Committee and the Open Market Committee, whose members were: the Governor, the Vice Governors and the Directors of the Bank. She was also asked to liaise with the World Bank and the IMF on behalf of the Governor.

And then there was the curious case of Circular 331, the \$400-million start-up platform, announced in August 2014.

According to the Lebanese law, the Central Bank could not invest in equities directly. So, Salameh and Hoayek devised a scheme to advance money to commercial banks for investing in companies formed to use new technology to build the knowledge economy.

Two NGOs specializing in fighting financial crime have filed complaints in France on 30th April 2021, targeting Salameh, his brother and Hoayek for misappropriation of public funds and money laundering. The Swiss media have reported that the Swiss prosecutors were investigating Salameh's '*aggravated money laundering and possible embezzlement*'.

It has been alleged that Riad Salameh's fortune is in excess of two billion euros (\$2.4 billion).

In a curious development, Salameh on 31st January 2020 admitted to the National News Agency of Lebanon that \$1bn had been siphoned off by 'the system' and

sent abroad. He also confirmed this in an interview with the France24 news channel.

Reports in Lebanese and international media suggest that as much as \$100 billion could be missing from the Lebanese banking system. The IMF on 25th June 2020 estimated the losses of Banque Du Liban at \$49 billion, equivalent to 91 per cent of Lebanon's GDP in 2019! According to the World Bank the Central Bank losses were equal to the total deposits of the country's commercial banks with it. The Government of Lebanon has concurred with the IMF and the World bank estimates.

There are 122 political parties in Lebanon, of which 12 have members in the Parliament after October 2019 elections. The Taif Agreement of 1989 reapportioned the seats neatly in the Parliament with Christians and Muslims, each getting 64 deputies in the house of 128. The actual position after May 2018 Elections is as follows:

Political Party	Seats
F P M (Christian)	18
Hezbollah (Shia)	12
Amal (Shia)	10
Others	26
Government	66
Future (Sunni)	13
L F (Christian)	12
PSP (Druze)	6
Others	21
Opposition	52
Vacant	10
Total	128

Hezbollah sees the present weak and discredited government as the least bad option, believing any change would be seen as a political defeat. It is also vehemently opposed to any IMF conditions, such as its disarming. Shunned by the West, 'no reforms, no money', the Prime Minister looks east - approach advocated by Hezbollah. He seeks Chinese money, but China is not in the business of providing financial bail-outs. Normalization of relations with Syria and Iran will deepen Lebanon's isolation.

*"The political vacuum will prolong misery; assets are disappearing, people are leaving, institutions are going bankrupt,"* says Ishac Diwan, Professor at the École Normale Supérieure, Paris. *"If it continues like this, Lebanon will become Somalia."*

Tarek Masoud, Professor of International Relations at Harvard Kennedy School and Rami Khouri, Senior Fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs made the following critical observations on 20th August 2020 in their conversation:

- Lebanon is now just another Arab country with a corrupt political elite
- The State has become militarized
- Hezbollah is stronger than the government
- Syria used to control Lebanon after the Civil War, now it's Hezbollah
- Lebanon has lost its sovereignty

Rima Majed, Professor of Sociology at the American University of Beirut, summed it up when he said, *"Lebanon is facing a bleak future, in this country, we don't believe there is rock bottom anymore."*

Sami Hermez, Associate Professor of Anthropology at Northwestern University in Qatar recalls a plaintive conversation with his friend in Beirut, *"Let us just die in silence. Everyone, just shut up,"* the friend told him in anger and frustration as he saw no hope.

After the explosion of 4th August 2020, some Lebanese intellectuals felt, *"we have not hit rock bottom"* as perhaps *"the war is coming,"*. This feeling he described as *"ghassa"* - a heartbreak, a lump in the throat, the knot in one's gut, or the trifecta of these feelings".

In this *ghassa*, he says, we can understand the work of time and the place of the future. The *ghassa's* orientation is entangled; an entanglement that is a result of wanting to press forward, while also wanting to return to a past, to a moment

before the crisis. The *ghassa* is anticipation embodied; a brush with the future that is deeply informed by the past and present. The *ghassa*, he says, brings us to the future.

What kind of future?

Sometimes, it feels as if Lebanon is committing slow suicide, humming the lines of Khalil Gibran,

*For what is it to die,  
But to stand naked in the wind and  
To melt into the sun?  
And what is it to cease breathing,  
But to free the breath from its restless tides,  
So that it may rise and expand  
And seek God unencumbered?*



Self-portrait, Credit: Wikipedia.org

\*

Armenia: Noah's forgotten children

## Armenia: Noah's forgotten children

Mankind has seen many horrific periods of barbarity, but no nation has suffered so much from religious persecution, over such a long time, as Armenia has.

The crying shame is that even the Christian nations (with a solitary exception) have, in the past, chosen to ignore the great agony of this tiny nation of three and a half million people, which became the first Christian state when Tiridates III (238–314) made Christianity the state religion in 301 AD.

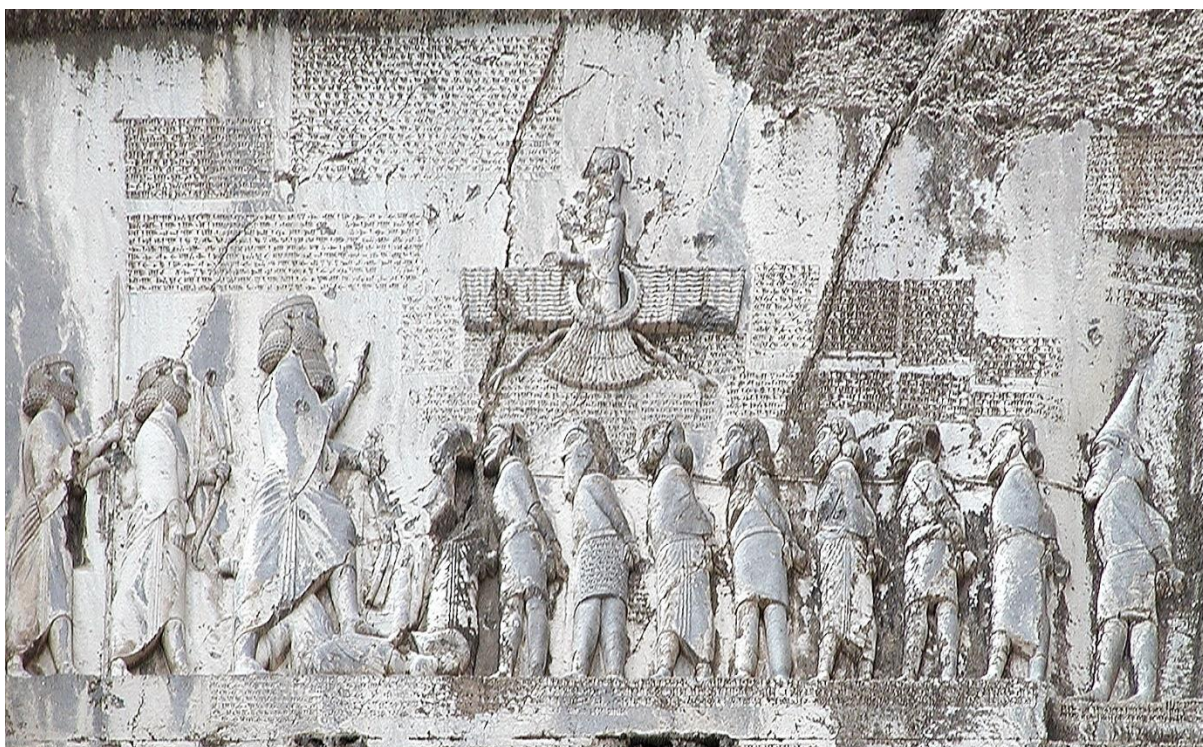


Tiridates III (238–314), Credit: humbleandloyalblogspot.com

The Book of Genesis (the first book of the Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament) is viewed by the faithful as the account of the creation of the world. According to it, God created a world which was good and fit for man, but when he corrupted it with Sin, He decided to destroy His creation, sparing only the righteous Noah and his family to re-establish the relationship between Him and man.

The first covenant with Noah speaks of mountains of Ararat where Noah's Ark came to rest after the great flood (Genesis 8:4). The Biblical Ararat was named 'Arminya' by the Persians.

Behistun, a historical town in Iran, is the site of many ancient monuments, one of which carries an inscription by Darius I. In this trilingual inscription, carved in 521 BC, there is a reference to 'Arminya' in Old Persian.



Behistun inscription reliefs, Credit: wikipedia.org

The Book of Jubilees, also called the Lesser Genesis, speaks of the Ark coming to rest on one of the peaks of the ‘Mountains of Ararat’ (7:1). The original translation of the Bible into Latin says: *Requievitque arca... super montes Armeniae*, which literally means, ‘And the ark rested... on the mountains of Armenia’.

Harrison Ford was not the first ‘Raider of the Lost Ark’! The quest for the remains of Noah’s ark in the mountains of Armenia consumed the ancient world. The Greek historian Abydenus wrote around 200 BC: *“To him the Deity foretold that on the fifteenth day of the month, there would be a deluge of rain: and He commanded him to deposit all the writings which were in his possession, in the city of the Sun in Sippara. When he had complied with commands, he sailed immediately to Armenia and was presently inspired by God. With respect to the vessel, which yet remains in Armenia, it is a custom of the inhabitants to form bracelets and amulets of its wood.”*

He seems to be echoing the words of Nicolaus of Damascus, another Greek historian, who wrote in 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, *“There is, in the land of Armenia, a very great mountain which is called Baris/Masis; to which, it is said, that many persons retreated at the time of the deluge, and were saved; and that one in particular was carried thither in an ark, and was landed on its summit, and that the remains of the vessel were long preserved upon the mountain. Perhaps this was the same individual to whom Moses the legislator of the Jews has made mention.”*



Depiction of Noah's ark landing on the mountains of Armenia,  
From the North French Hebrew Miscellany (13<sup>th</sup> century), Credit: Wikipedia.org

Alexander Polyhistor (50 BC) describes a similar flood story, in which a Deity appears to Xisuthrus (*Ziusudra, or Xisouthros of Shuruppak [c. 2900 BC] listed as the last king of Sumer prior to the Great Flood. He is subsequently recorded as the hero of the Sumerian creation myth and appears in the writings as Xisuthros*) in a vision warning him of an imminent flood, which would destroy mankind. The Deity tells Xisuthrus to build a vessel, and take with him his friends and relations, together with animals of different types. When Xisuthrus asks the Deity where the vessel will be heading, the Deity answers: *"To the Gods."*



'NOAH'S ARK on Mount Ararat' (1570) by Flemish painter Simon de Myle,  
Credit: Wikipedia Commons

Interestingly, Mount Ararat in ancient Armenia was considered the home of Gods, much like Mount Olympus in Greek mythology. After the flood, Xisuthrus released birds to search for land which he found after the 3<sup>rd</sup> try. Xisuthrus and his companions initially decided to turn the ark into their residence, but later, they were taken by Gods, leaving the group with the following message, *"They should return to Babylonia, as ordained and that the place was the land of Armenia, the land of the ancient Gods"*. He concludes: *"The vessel being stranded in Armenia, some part of it yet remains in the Corcyraean mountains of Armenia and the people scrape off the bitumen, with which it had been outwardly coated, and make use of it by way of alexipharmic and amulet."*

It is a tragedy of epic proportions that the place of refuge for God's threatened creations turned out to be the place where the greatest genocide against a people was carried out.

There have been five recorded 'genocides' in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

1. Armenian genocide (1915-23)
2. Cambodian genocide (1975-79)
3. The Holocaust (1933-45)
4. Holodomor, the Ukraine (1932-33) and
5. Rwanda (April-July 1994).

Raphael Lemkin (1900 -1959), a Polish lawyer of Jewish descent coined the term 'genocide' in 1943 from *Genos* (Greek for family or race) and *Cide* (Latin for killing) after reading about the assassination of Talaat Pasha, the chief perpetrator of the Armenian Genocide. Lemkin asked his Professor Julius Makarewicz why Talaat Pasha could not have been tried for his crimes in a German court. Makarewicz supported the expulsion of the Jews and the Ukrainians from Poland. He said, the doctrine of State Sovereignty gave governments the right to conduct internal affairs as they saw fit.



Credit: artsandculture.google.com

*"Consider the case of a farmer who owns a flock of chickens", he continued, "he kills them and this is his business. If you interfere, you are trespassing." Lemkin was horrified, "But the Armenians are not chickens". Lemkin fumed, 'Sovereignty cannot be conceived as the right to kill millions of innocent people'.*

Twenty years later, in 1948, the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide codified genocide as acts *'having intent to destroy, in whole, or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group'*.

The Armenian Genocide began on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1915. Over eight years, between 1 and 1.5 million Armenians were killed.

The Cambodian Genocide (1975 - 1979), was carried out by the ruling Communist Party, the Khmer Rouge, under the leadership of Pol Pot; about two million (a quarter of the country's population) were killed.

The Holocaust: Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazi regime and its collaborators murdered six million European Jews and five million non-Jews. The terms 'Shoah' (destruction) and 'Holocaust' are used to describe the extermination of Jews by the Nazis.

Holodomor (death by starvation), The Ukrainian Genocide: Between 1932 and 1933, about 3.5 to 7 million Ukrainians died in the man-made famine caused by the policies of Stalin.

Rwanda: In 100 days between April and July 1994, one million Tutsis and Hutus were killed.

Each genocide is a horror story and Rwanda is not the end of the story. Right now, genocides are being committed in at least 13 countries.

According to GenocideWatch (*We exist to predict, prevent, stop, and punish genocide and other forms of mass murder. Our purpose is to build an international movement to prevent and stop genocide*), there are ten stages of Genocide:

1. Classification 2. Symbolization 3. Discrimination 4. Dehumanization 5. Organization 6. Polarization 7. Preparation 8. Persecution 9. Extermination and 10. Denial

The ten phases can be grouped into two: Persecution and Extermination; Denial is common to all phases.

Adolf Hitler while addressing the Wehrmacht commanders at Obersalzberg on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1939 (a week before the German invasion of Poland), is reported to have said, *"Genghis Khan had millions of women and children hunted down and killed, with a gay heart. History sees him only as the great founder of the State. I have given the order that the aim of this war does not consist in reaching certain geographical lines, but in the enemies' physical*

*elimination. Thus, I put ready my Death's Head units, with the order to kill without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of the Polish race or language. Only thus, will we gain the living space that we need. After all, who talks now of the extermination of the Armenians?"*



Credit: sparklight.com



Credit: hitler-archive.com



Genghis Khan, Credit: nationalgeographic.com

Yehuda Bauer, an Israeli historian says,

*"The horror of the Holocaust is not that it deviated from human norms; the horror is that it didn't. What happened may happen again, to others not necessarily Jews, perpetrated by others, not necessarily Germans. We are all possible victims, possible perpetrators, possible bystanders."*

### Genocides in 20<sup>th</sup> Century

State	Period	Number Killed in Million
China	1949-50, 1958-61, 1966-69	49-78
USSR	1932-39	23.0
Germany	1939-1945	12.0
Congo	1886-1908	8.0
Japan	1941-44	5.0
Turkey	1915-20	2.5
Cambodia	1975-79	1.7
North Korea	1948-94	1.6
Ethiopia	1975-78	1.5
Biafra	1967-1970	1.0
Afghanistan	1979-1982	0.9
Rwanda	1994	0.8
Iraq	1980-1990, 1987-88	0.6
Yugoslavia	1945-1987	0.6
Indonesia	1965-66	0.5
Japan	1937-39	0.5
Angola	1975-2002	0.4
Afghanistan	1986-2001	0.4
Uganda	1969-1979	0.3
Pakistan	1970-71	0.3
Italy	1934-45	0.3
TOTAL		116-146

According to Mount Holyoake College, Massachusetts, there have been at least twenty genocides in the 20th Century in which 110 - 140 million people have been massacred.

According to GenocideWatch, at least 13 genocides are taking place now:

#### Countries where Genocides are taking place

S. N.	Country	Genocide Stage/s
1	Azerbaijan	Extermination
2	Burundi	Persecution
3	Central African Republic	Persecution, Extermination
4	China	Extermination
5	Ethiopia	Extermination
6	Iraq	Extermination
7	Myanmar	Persecution, Extermination
8	Nigeria	Persecution, Extermination
9	Somalia	Extermination
10	Sudan	Extermination
11	Syria	Extermination
12	Turkey	Extermination
13	Yemen	Extermination

As stated earlier, the ten phases can be grouped into two: Persecution and Extermination; Denial is common to all phases.

The original name for Armenia was ‘Hayk’, after the legendary patriarch of the Armenians who is considered to be the great-great-grandson of Noah. Hayk, according to the legend, defeated the Babylonian king Bel in 2492 BC and established the Armenian nation in the Ararat region. ‘Armenia’ is cited in the old Persian Inscription (515 BC) as Armina. ‘Armenía’ and ‘Armenians’ are also mentioned by Hecataeus (550 BC - 476 BC), followed by Xenophon, the Greek general who described the Armenian village life around 401 BC.

Evidence for this can also be found in the work composed by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus in the 1st century AD. Flavius Josephus writes: “the ark rested on the top of a certain mountain in Armenia. The Armenians call this place, ‘The Place of Descent’; for the ark and its remains are shown there by the inhabitants to this day. Berossus, a Hellenistic-era Babylonian priest, astronomer and writer, goes

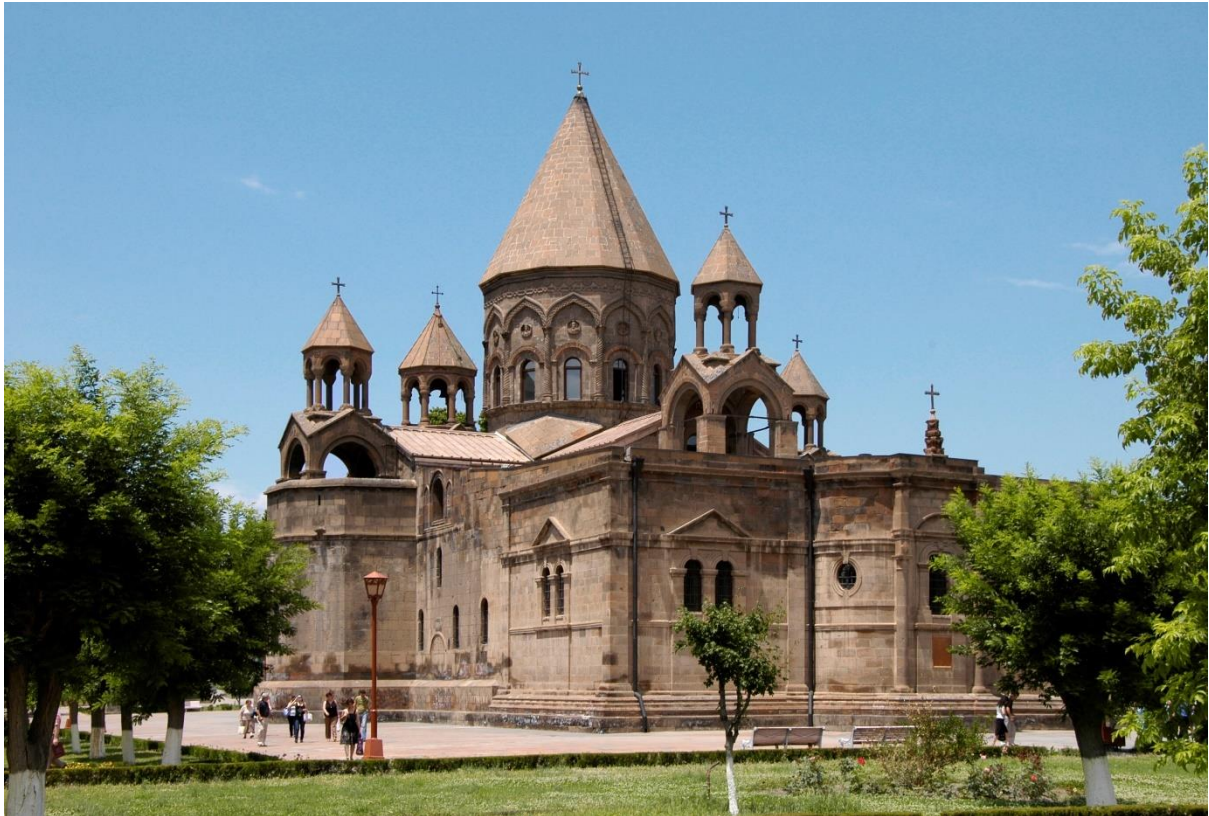
on thus: “It is said there is still some part of this ship in Armenia, at the mountain of the Cordyaeans; and that some people carry off pieces of the bitumen, which they take away, and use chiefly as amulets for the averting of mischiefs.”



Hayk, Credit: wikipedia.org



Asia Minor in the early 2nd century AD



The Etchmiadzin Cathedral, Armenia's Mother Church traditionally dated 303 AD is considered the oldest cathedral in the world, Credit: Wikipedia.org



Gregory the Illuminator, the first Patriarch of the Armenian Church, Credit: catholic.org

The legend has it that the design and the place came to St. Gregory in a vision: Christ descended to the Ararat valley and struck with a golden hammer to indicate the location of the cathedral.

Prior to Christianity, religion in ancient Armenia was a set of beliefs that gave way to Zoroastrianism from the neighboring Persia. Christianity rapidly spread into the country after 40 AD. Tiridates III of Armenia (238–314) made Christianity the state religion in 301, making Armenia the first Christian state, 36 years before Constantine the Great was baptised.

With the growth of Christianity, there was a need to revive the lost Armenian alphabet. The Masses in the Armenian churches were sung in Greek, the Royalty and nobility spoke Greek and it was also the language of instruction. The task was assigned to Mesrob Mashtots, a scholar monk, who travelled throughout Armenia and the Mediterranean world in search of the lost scriptures. In Edessa (in present day Iraq), he found some scrolls in old Armenian, and after carefully reviewing them, recreated the Armenian alphabet in 405 AD.



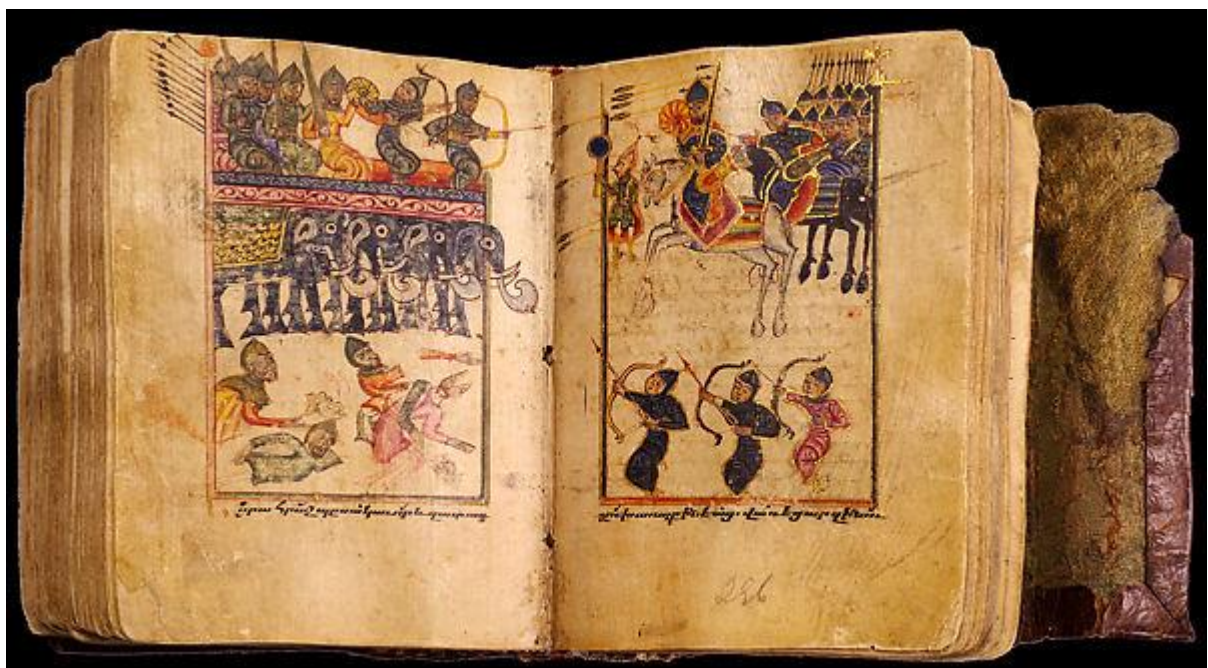
St. Mesrop Mashtots, Credit: wikipedia.org

In 425 AD the Bible was translated into the Armenian language, the fifth known translation, after the Syriac, the Latin, the Coptic and the Abyssinian languages. Some scholars regard this translation, done by St. Mesrob and his disciples, as the best Bible translation ever. The French linguists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century termed it, the "Queen of translations".



Ancient Armenian version of the Bible, Credit: christianpublishinghouse.co

While the influence of the Church was growing, the political fortunes of Armenia were on the decline. Armenia lost independence after the Battle of Avarayr war of 451 AD, between the Christian Armenian army under Vardan Mamikonian and Sassanid Persian army led by Mushkan Niusalavurt.

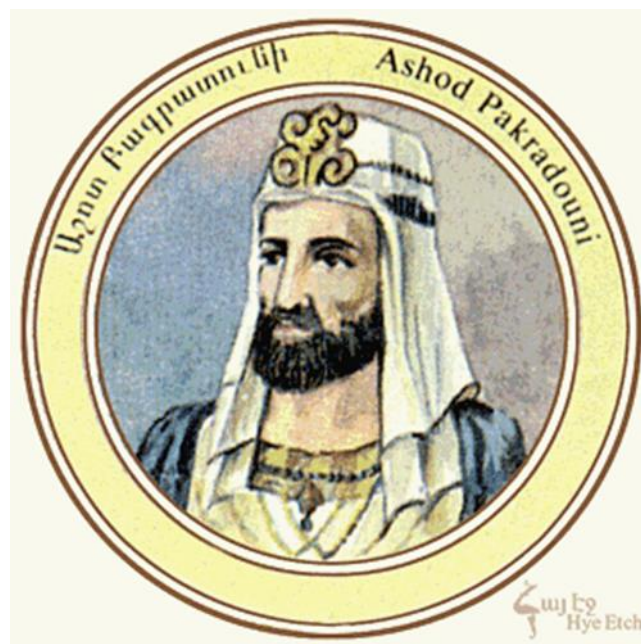


Hymnal Depicting the Battle of Avarayr, Credit: metmuseum.org

For two centuries, the eastern provinces were ruled by the Persian *marzpan*s (Governors). The Persian King Yazdegerd II tried to put an end to Christianity in Armenia, to impose Zoroastrianism. Armenians revolted when numerous Persian priests were sent to Armenia to build temples and to conduct fire worship ceremonies.

Around 590 AD a new division of Armenia between Persia and Byzantine Empire took place. The Caliphate began to expand, Egypt and Syria became Islamic countries. By 680 AD the Arabs destroyed Persian resistance and Zoroastrianism was replaced by Islam. By the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Caliphate's policy towards Armenia and its Christian faith hardened. Ostikans (the title used by Armenians for the governors of the early Caliphates) were appointed as the Representatives of the Caliph to govern Armenia. Although it became part of the Caliph's domain, Armenia remained faithful to the Christian religion. The Ostikans failed in their attempts to convert Armenians to Islam. The Armenian obstinacy exasperated Caliph and in 705 AD he ordered the Ostikans to kill all Armenian Christians. In one such move, more than 400 Armenian noblemen were trapped in one of Nakhichevan churches, the doors were closed and the church was set on fire. In 850 -851 AD, there were two more massacres of the Armenian people.

It took about thirty years for peace and prosperity to return to Armenia in the reign of Ashot Bagradouni, who maintained balance between the Arabs and the Greeks and was crowned the King of Armenia in 884 AD.



Ashot Bagradouni, Credit: hayastan.com

The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries brought death and destruction of the churches at the hands of the Mongol and the Turkoman armies.



The Mongolian army in the battle of Köse Dağ in 1243, Credit: wikipedia.org



The church of St Gregory of Tigran Honents, Credit: Sara Yeomans/Flickr



Credit: Wikimedia.org



Previous page, The Monastery of the Hripsimian Virgins, Credit: [eggs-in-art-en.blogspot.com](http://eggs-in-art-en.blogspot.com)



Credit: Mr. Hicks46/Flickr





Credit: Mr. Hicks46/Flickr



Credit: mirrorspectator.com

The Crusades were a series of religious wars initiated, supported, and sometimes directed by the Latin Church in the medieval period. The best-known Crusades are those to the Holy Land between 1095 and 1291 to liberate Jerusalem and the surrounding area from the Islamic rule.

### Timeline of the Crusades

Crusade	Start	Key Details
First	1095	Pope Urban II calls on the Christians of Europe to march east to recover Jerusalem from the Muslims
Second	1147	The second crusade is led by two kings, Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany
Third	1190	A year after succeeding to the throne of England, Richard I sets off east as one of the leaders of the third crusade
Fourth	1202	The fleet of the fourth crusade called by Pope Innocent III departs from Venice
Fifth	1217	The crusade led by Andrew II of Hungary and Leopold VI of Austria and joined by John of Brienne was inconclusive
Sixth	1228	The crusade led by Frederick II resulted in the Treaty of Jaffa, the contents of which were not universally acclaimed.
Seventh	1248	This Crusade to Egypt was led by Louis IX of France. His army was defeated by the Ayyubid army led by Fakhr ad-Din ibn as-Shaikh
Eighth	1270	The crusade is considered a failure as Louis IX of France died shortly after arriving in Tunisia, his dispersing back to Europe soon afterwards
Ninth (last)	1271	Led by Lord Edward (Future King Edward I of England), the clash with Baibars was inconclusive.

In 1095, Pope Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont. He called for military support for the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I against the Seljuk Turks, calling it ‘armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem’. Across all social strata, there was a rousing response. The first Crusaders had many motivations including religious salvation, feudal obligations, economic and political opportunities. Later crusades were generally conducted by organized armies, sometimes led by a king.



Pope Urban II orders the first Crusade - November 27, 1095, Credit: history.co.uk



Proclaimed a crusade in 1123, the struggle between the Christians and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula was called the Reconquista by Christians and ended in 1492 with the fall of the Muslim Emirate of Granada.

In the early 15<sup>th</sup> century Armenia was divided into many small principalities. After the conquest of Constantinople by Sultan Muhammad II in 1453, Armenia was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. The Armenian Church was thrown in disorder. A large number of Armenians migrated to Crimea, Russia, Poland and India.

Proclaimed a crusade in 1123, the struggle between the Christians and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula was called the *Reconquista* by Christians and ended in 1492 with the fall of the Muslim Emirate of Granada.

In the early 15<sup>th</sup> century Armenia was divided into many small principalities. After the conquest of Constantinople by Sultan Muhammad II in 1453, Armenia was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. The Armenian Church was thrown in disorder. A large number of Armenians migrated to Crimea, Russia, Poland and India.



Sultan Muhammad II, Credit: aalequtub.com

From the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Armenia witnessed confrontation between the Ottoman Empire and Iran. The Armenian population was a victim of their bloody conflicts for more than two centuries. Following the armistice in 1639 the territory of Armenia was split between the Ottoman Empire and Iran.

From the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Armenians began to place their hopes on the Russian Power. A number of messengers were sent to the Russian czars seeking protection. The rich Armenian community of New Julfa (in Iran) presented the Czar Alexis I Mikhailovich a golden throne adorned with precious stones. In late 17<sup>th</sup> century, ties with Russia strengthened further.

Armenia was buoyant under the reign of the Russian Empress Catherine the Great (1762-1796). As a result of the two successful wars against the Ottoman Empire, Russian annexed new territories. As the Russian influence in Caucasus grew, the Persian power declined. In 1800, neighbour Georgia became part of the Russian Empire. Under the Treaty of Gulistan (1813) Eastern Armenia became part of the Russian Empire. After the Treaty of Torkamanchay (1828), most of the Eastern Armenia came under Russian control, with a large number of Armenians moving back to Eastern Armenia from Persia.



Abdul Hamid II, Credit: dailysabah.com

The 34<sup>th</sup> Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Abd al-Hamid II (1842 -1918) was the last Sultan to exert despotic control over his shrinking Empire. From 1894 to 1896, he ordered systematic massacres of Armenians to crush their aspiration for freedom. He considered the Christian Armenians as an ever-present excuse for Europeans, especially, Russians to interfere in his affairs. In his assaults on Western Armenia more than two hundred thousand Armenians are reported to have been killed.

The new opposition Party of the Young Turks rose in the Ottoman Empire in 1908. After the 'Young Turk Revolution', the Sultan became a symbolic figure and

was forced to abdicate in 1909. The Young Turks continues his policy of oppressing the Armenians and in the bloody attacks on Adana and Cilicia, where the Turkish mobs were supported by the army, 35,000 Armenians were killed.



Credit: twitter.com

In 1913, a *coup d'etat* within the ruling Union and Progress Committee party brought the triumvirate of Enver, Talaat and Gemal Pasha to power. The racist doctrines of Pan-Turkism, national exclusiveness and creation of a homogeneous state were adopted by the party. Armenians were denounced as superfluous and dangerous elements inside the Empire. Armenian bankers were accused of "looting the country" and the intelligentsia was blamed of undermining the State.

The Armenian Genocide started on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1915. The Armenians commemorate it, as on this date, more than 200 Armenian intellectuals and leaders were arrested and killed in Istanbul. The Armenian soldiers serving in the Turkish army were disarmed and then killed. In all major towns and cities, the Armenian shops and business establishments were looted under the pretext of 'war contributions.' In November 2014, Russia declared war on Turkey and in return, Turkey proclaimed Jihad in all provinces. In March 1915, the call to exterminate all Armenians throughout the Ottoman Empire was issued by the Ittihad committee of the Party of the Young Turks. In October 1916, the German Ambassador Wilhelm Radowitz reported to his foreign ministry that out of the two and a half million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire before the genocide, only 300 000 survived, the rest were deported and massacred.

Ambassador Morgenthau's Story (1918) is the title of the published memoirs of Henry Morgenthau Sr., the U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916. The book was dedicated to the then U.S. President Woodrow Wilson.

The book is a primary source regarding the Armenian genocide and the Greek genocide during the last years of the Ottoman Empire.

The First-Person account of Ambassador Morgenthau faithfully records gory details of the abominable tragedy of the Armenian genocide, as it was unravelling, while the European powers were in denial. A sample of this gruesome history:

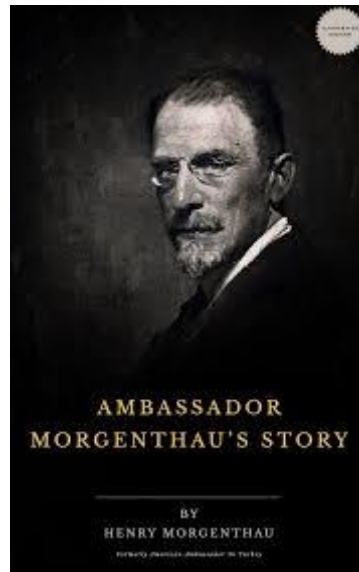
## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE MURDER OF A NATION

'In the early part of 1915, every Turkish city contained thousands of Armenians who had been trained as soldiers and who were supplied with rifles, pistols, and other weapons of defence. The operations at Van once more disclosed that these men could use their weapons to good advantage. It was thus apparent that if the plan of murdering a race were to succeed, it would be necessary to render all Armenian soldiers powerless and the Armenians in every city and town had to be deprived of their weapons. Before Armenia could be slaughtered, Armenia must be made defenceless.

Sultan Abd al-Hamid II known as the "Red Sultan" and stigmatized by Gladstone as 'the great assassin' devised his state policy to solve the Armenian problem by murdering the entire race. The fear of England, France, Russia, and America, was the only thing that restrained him from accomplishing this task. His successors,

Talaat and Enver, however, have no such fear and have successfully carried out his programme. I do not believe that the darkest ages ever presented scenes more horrible than those which now took place all over Turkey. Nothing was sacred to the Turkish gendarmes; they ransacked churches, treated the altars and sacred utensils with the utmost indignity, and even held mock ceremonies in imitation of the Christian sacraments. They would beat the priests into insensibility, under the pretence that they were the centres of sedition.'



Morgenthau with his children, Credit: gutenburg.org



Mod  
M8516a

# AMBASSADOR MORGENTHAU'S STORY

BY  
HENRY MORGENTHAU

*Formerly American Ambassador to Turkey*



ILLUSTRATED

176749.  
11.12.22.

GARDEN CITY      NEW YORK  
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY  
1919

Pub. in U.K. under title: Secrets of the Bosphorus,  
London: Hutchinson & Co., 1918.

Ambassador Morgenthau's Story (1918) is the title of the published memoirs of Henry Morgenthau Sr., the U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916. The book was dedicated to the then U.S. President Woodrow Wilson.

The book is a primary source regarding the Armenian genocide and the Greek genocide during the last years of the Ottoman Empire.

The First-Person account of Ambassador Morgenthau faithfully records gory details of the abominable tragedy of the Armenian genocide, as it was unravelling, while the European powers were in denial. A sample of this gruesome history:

#### CHAPTER XXIV

#### THE MURDER OF A NATION

*In the early part of 1915, every Turkish city contained thousands of Armenians who had been trained as soldiers and who were supplied with rifles, pistols, and other weapons of defence. The operations at Van once more disclosed that these men could use their weapons to good advantage. It was thus apparent that if the plan of murdering a race were to succeed, it would be necessary to render all Armenian soldiers powerless and the Armenians in every city and town had to be deprived of their weapons. Before Armenia could be slaughtered, Armenia must be made defenceless.*

*Sultan Abd al-Hamid II known as the "Red Sultan" and stigmatized by Gladstone as 'the great assassin' devised his state policy to solve the Armenian problem by murdering the entire race. The fear of England, France, Russia, and America, was the only thing that restrained him from accomplishing this task. His successors, Talaat and Enver, however, have no such fear and have successfully carried out his programme. I do not believe that the darkest ages ever presented scenes more horrible than those which now took place all over Turkey. Nothing was sacred to the Turkish gendarmes; they ransacked churches, treated the altars and sacred utensils with the utmost indignity, and even held mock ceremonies in imitation of the Christian sacraments. They would beat the priests into insensibility, under the pretence that they were the centres of sedition.'*

Ambassador Morgenthau without flinching, described the scenes of torture, thus:

*'As a preliminary to the searches everywhere, the strong men of the villages and towns were arrested and taken to prison. Their tormentors here would exercise the most diabolical ingenuity in their attempts to make their victims declare themselves to be 'revolutionists' and to tell the hiding places of their arms. The examination would then begin with the bastinado, a form of torture consisting of beating the soles of the feet with a thin rod. At first the pain is not marked; but as the process goes slowly on, it develops into the most terrible agony, the feet swell and burst, and often they have to be amputated. If this did not succeed in bringing their victim to terms, they*

*would pull out his eyebrows and beard almost hair by hair; they would extract his finger nails and toe nails; they would apply red-hot irons to his breast, tear off his flesh with red-hot pincers, and then pour boiled butter into the wounds. In some cases, the gendarmes would nail hands and feet to pieces of wood - evidently in imitation of the Crucifixion and then, they would cry: "Now let your Christ come and help you!"*

His discussions with the Turkish Government officials were brutally frank:

*'One day I was discussing these proceedings with a responsible Turkish official, who was describing the tortures inflicted. He made no secret of the fact that the Government had instigated them and like all Turks of the official classes, he enthusiastically approved this treatment of the detested race. This official told me that all these details were matters of nightly discussion at the headquarters of the Union and Progress Committee. Each new method of inflicting pain was hailed as a splendid discovery, and the regular attendants were constantly ransacking their brains in the effort to devise some new torment. He told me that they even delved into the records of the Spanish Inquisition and other historic institutions of torture and adopted all the suggestions found there. He did not tell me who carried off the prize in this gruesome competition, but common reputation throughout Armenia gave a preeminent infamy to Djerdet Bey, the Vali of Van, whose activities in that section I have already described. All through this country Djerdet was generally known as the "horseshoer of Bashkale" for this connoisseur in torture had invented what was perhaps the masterpiece of all - that of nailing horseshoes to the feet of his Armenian victims.'*

Ambassador Morgenthau was clearly distressed while writing about the brutalities inflicted on innocent Armenian men, women and children:

*'My only reason for relating such dreadful things as this is that, without the details, the English-speaking public cannot understand precisely what this nation is, which we call Turkey. I have by no means told the most terrible details, for a complete narration of the sadistic orgies of which these Armenian men and women were the victims can never be printed in an American publication. Whatever crimes the most perverted instincts of the human mind can devise, and whatever refinements of persecution and injustice the most debased imagination can conceive, became the daily misfortunes of this devoted people.'*

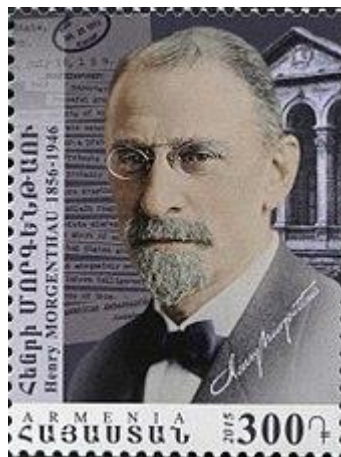
His denunciation of the horrid past of the Ottoman Empire was eloquent:

*'I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when compared with the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915. In the slaughter of the Albigenses in the early part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century about 60,000 people were killed. In the massacre of St. Bartholomew about 30,000 human beings lost their lives. The Sicilian Vespers, which has always figured as one of the most fiendish outbursts of this kind, caused the destruction of 8,000. Volumes have been written about the Spanish Inquisition under Torquemada, yet in the eighteen years of his administration about 8,000 heretics were done to death. Perhaps the one event in history that most resembles the Armenian deportations was the expulsion of the Jews from Spain by*

*Ferdinand and Isabella. According to Prescott 160,000 were uprooted from their homes and scattered broadcast over Africa and Europe. Yet all these previous persecutions seem almost trivial when we compare them with the sufferings of the Armenians, in which at least 600,000 people were destroyed and perhaps as many as 1,000,000. These massacres were the products of religious fanaticism, but the men who conceived the crimes against the Armenians were atheists, with no more respect for Islam than for Christianity and their only motive was cold-blooded, murderous State Policy.'*

Ambassador Morgenthau knew well that the Armenians were not the only victims of this murderous State Policy, that it was first tested successfully on the Greeks:

*The Armenians are not the only subject people in Turkey which have suffered from this policy of making Turkey exclusively the country of the Turks. It's the same story with the Greeks and the Syrians. In the few months preceding the European War, the Ottoman Government began deporting its Greek subjects along the coast of Asia Minor and in the space of three or four months more than 100,000 Greeks were taken from their age-long homes in the Mediterranean and removed to the interior. In fact, Bedri Bey, the Prefect of Police at Constantinople, told one of my secretaries that the Turks had expelled the Greeks so successfully that they had decided to apply the same method to all other races in the Empire.*



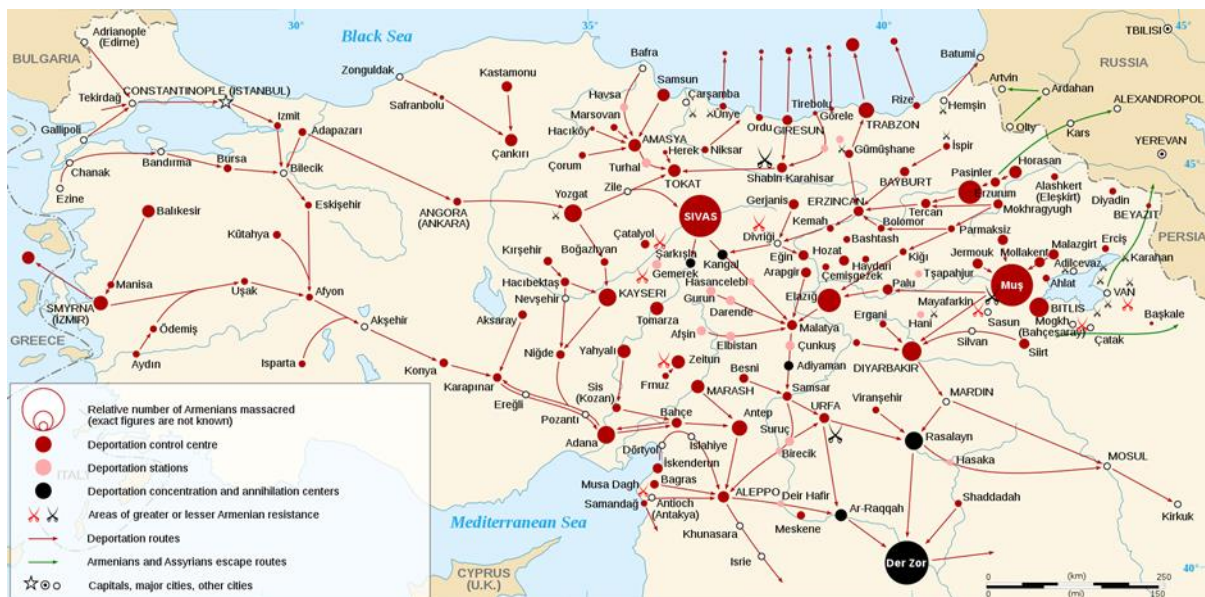
Morgenthau on a 2015 Armenian stamp from the series "Centennial of the Armenian Genocide". In the background is the telegram pictured above, Credit: wikipedia.org

Leslie A. Davis, the US Consul to Harput, from 1914 to 1917 was a witness to the genocide. He saw how large clusters of Armenian populations, who were being deported from provinces outside Harput to Syria, were rerouted to Harput *"only to be butchered in this province. 'The mass deportations ordered by the Turks, in which hundreds of thousands of Armenians were crammed into freight cars and shipped hundreds of miles to die in the desert or at the hands of killing squads, were far worse than a straightforward massacre, he*

wrote. "In a massacre many escape; but a wholesale deportation of this kind in this country means a longer and perhaps even more dreadful death for nearly everyone."



Leslie Davis, Credit: wikipedia.org



Map of the Armenian genocide in 1915

The Ottoman gazette gave a figure of 800,000 Armenians killed between 1915 and 1918. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, during a conversation with Major General Harbord, the Chief of the American Military Mission to Armenia, quoted the same figure in September 1919. This figure of 800,000 excludes Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army liquidated in the early stages of the genocide, as well as the number of women and children 'assimilated' into Turkish families.



Credit: Wikipedia.org

According to the records of Talaat Pasha, more than 970,000 Armenians ‘disappeared’ from the Ottoman official files in 1915-1916. In 1983, Talaat's widow, Hayriye Talaat Bafra, gave his records to Turkish journalist Murat Bardakçı, who published them in a book titled ‘The Remaining Documents of Talat Pasha’ (also known as ‘Talat Pasha's Black Book’). According to the ‘Black Book’, the number of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire before 1915 was

1,256,000. However, he believed that this number under-estimated the Armenian population by thirty percent (the real number would be about 1,632,800). Further, this number did not account for the Protestant Armenians. According to historian Ara Sarafian, the population of Armenians should have been approximately 1.7 million before the war. That number plunged to 284,157 two years later in 1917.

A report dated 27<sup>th</sup> May 1916 of the German Foreign Office Intelligence Director Erzberger stated that 1.5 million Armenians were killed during the War. The report of Germany's Ambassador to Turkey, Radowitz dated 4<sup>th</sup> October 1916 repeated the same number.

The subject of the Armenian genocide has become greatly politicised. In a world swayed by narrative rather than facts, the truth, as in the war, is the first casualty!

The Armenian Genocide, like the Jewish Holocaust, has grown in significance over the decades. But whereas, the Jewish intellectuals and social media influencers have successfully created and strengthened the Holocaust identity, the Armenians have not been able to do the same.

Every 24<sup>th</sup> April, since 1994, the U.S. President has delivered a homily honoring the deaths of one and a half million people of Armenian ancestry, without uttering the 'G-word'. It has always been an exercise in 'linguistic realpolitik' because of vociferous objections from Turkey.

Joe Biden overturned decades of the US policy, when he recognized the 1915 Armenian Genocide on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2021, using the G-word, but with a lot of diplomatic finesse. *"We affirm the history," he said, "not to cast blame but to ensure that what happened is never repeated."*

The US recognition came five years after the Bundestag passed a resolution in June 2016, calling the massacre a genocide and apologizing for Germany's complicity with the Ottomans Empire. The U.S. is now among 30-odd countries, including France, Germany and Canada, that have formally recognized the Armenian genocide; India, the U.K. and Israel, have not.

The modern history of Armenia covers a hundred years, from the establishment of the First Republic of Armenia (1918–1920). Although the Imperial Russian Caucasus Army and Armenian militia succeeded in gaining most of the Ottoman Armenia during the World War I, their gains were lost with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The Russian-controlled Eastern Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan attempted to form the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic, which lasted four months (February to May 1918), when it was dissolved. The Eastern Armenia declared its independence on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1918 as the First Republic of Armenia.



Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic 1923, Mount Ararat, Credit: Wikipedia.org

The First Republic's short-lived independence was fraught with war, territorial disputes, and a mass influx of refugees from the Ottoman-ruled Western Armenia, bringing starvation and disease.

At the end of the World War I, the victorious powers sought to divide up the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Sèvres of 10<sup>th</sup> August 1920, promised to maintain the existence of the Armenian republic and to attach the former territories of the Ottoman-ruled Armenia to it. Because the new borders of Armenia were to be drawn by the U S President Woodrow Wilson, the Ottoman Armenia was referred to as the 'Wilsonian Armenia'.

In 1920, the Turkish nationalist forces invaded the fledgling Armenian Republic from the east. The Turkish forces captured Armenian territories that Russia had annexed in the the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish War. The resultant Treaty of Alexandropol of 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1920 forced Armenia to disarm its military forces, cede all the Ottoman territory given to it by the Treaty of Sèvres.

Armenia got annexed by the Soviet Red Army, along with Georgia and Azerbaijan and was merged into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as part of the TSFSR (Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic) on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1922. The TSFSR lasted from 1922 to 1936, when it was divided up into three separate entities (Armenian SSR, Azerbaijan SSR, and Georgian SSR).

Armenians enjoyed a period of relative stability within the USSR. They received medicine, food, and other provisions from Moscow and the Communist rule proved peaceful in contrast to the traumatic final years of the Ottoman Empire. The situation, however, was difficult for the Church, which struggled with the anti-religious Communist policies.

Although Armenia was not the scene of any battles in World War II, an estimated 500,000 Armenians (nearly a third of the population) fought in the War in which about 175,000 died.

With the death of Stalin on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1953 and the emergence of Khrushchev as the General Secretary of the CPSU, life in Armenia and the Church affairs improved.

During the Gorbachev era of the 1980s, tensions developed between Azerbaijan and its autonomous district of Nagorno-Karabakh, a majority Armenian region. The Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh demanded unification with Armenia and their protests were met with force, resulting in anti-Azerbaijani violence in Armenia. Gorbachev's inability to meet Armenia's aspirations disillusioned the masses and led to demand for independence. In May 1990, the New Armenian Army (NAA) was established, as a defence force separate from the Soviet Army. The continued Azerbaijani repression of the Armenians living there, forced the 200,000-strong community in Baku to flee to Armenia. In retaliation, Armenia declared independence on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1990.



On 21st September 1991, Armenia officially declared its statehood. Levon Ter-Petrosyan was elected the first President of the Independent Republic of Armenia on 16th October 1991. On 26th December 1991, the Soviet Union ceased to exist and Armenia's independence was recognised.



Levon Ter-Petrosyan, Credit: wikipedia.org

The initial post-Soviet years were marred by economic difficulties, with economic blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey. The Karabakh war ended after a Russian-brokered cease-fire was put in place in 1994. Armenia got 16% of Azerbaijan's territory including Nagorno-Karabakh. The Armenian forces remained in control of that territory until 2020. By the time Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed to a ceasefire in 1994, almost 30,000 people had been killed and over a million had been displaced.

The simmering, decades-long conflict erupted on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Skirmishes between the two had been a regular feature for decades, along the front lines of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan but is home to a large number of Armenians. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan suffered heavy military and civilian casualties. Turkey's intervention on the side of the fellow-Muslim country, Azerbaijan forced Armenia's hand into signing the ceasefire agreement in widely seen as its defeat.

The Russia-brokered peace deal signed on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 by President Putin of Russia, President Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia called for Armenian army's withdrawal from Nagorno-Karabakh and its replacement by Russian peacekeepers. It also allowed Azerbaijan to keep a part of the territory it had captured, but left the capital of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Stepanakert, under Armenian control, protected by Russian peacekeepers.

The deal has made Armenia reliant on Russia for security, thereby weakening its independence. Protests erupted in Armenia, people expressing anger at the agreement and questioning whether the Pashinyan government could remain in power to enforce it. But the snap election results announced on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 show that Armenian voters seem willing to accept the agreement.

Azerbaijan too had to compromise, nearly 2,000 Russian troops are now stationed there, as peacekeepers. That gives Moscow a military foothold just north of Iran putting Russian troops in an area of what has been an intractable ethnic conflict.

Russia has got Armenia in its sphere of influence again and Turkey has got a foothold in the South Caucasus, with its military officials at the Command Centre in Azerbaijan.

‘Genocide’ has not received as much attention of philosophers, as Socrates or Descartes would have liked. This is perhaps because of the numbing experience of the past and present genocides coupled with political expediency. Political scientists who have studied it, mostly view Genocide as a fall-out of domestic politics, which gains international significance when the violations of international law become media stories.

Genocide has been used as an instrument of state policy, since the dawn of our civilization. There cannot be a better example of this than Adolf Hitler referring Genghiz Khan to the Wehrmacht commanders at Obersalzberg on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1939, a week before invading Poland. The fact that despite hundreds of millions of people having been killed in dozens of genocides in scores of countries in the last century and more than a dozen genocides are still raging, it should be a matter of great immediate and global concern, but it is not.

The world is bored and boredom breeds apathy.

This is because there is a great fatigue in the international bodies and within great powers leading to inaction. President Clinton admitted in a TV interview on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013, “*we could have saved 300,000 lives in Rwanda, if the US had gone in sooner*”. In similar vein, French Prime Minister Macron sought forgiveness for France’s inaction in Rwanda, on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

Expressing regret or seeking forgiveness *post facto*, is easy and good politics, but the truth is that even great powers have limitations, when and where interventions are required. They also understand that their own actions in similar cases in the past have hardly been beyond reproach. ‘Kill them to save us’ is a genocide cry that their people have often given in the past.

Armenia is an epic tragedy. All genocides are abominable, but the two that are most horrible are the ones which were unleashed on the Jews and the Armenians. The sheer scale and magnitude, in terms of time, space, people and destruction of their cultures are simply horrifying and depressing.

In case of the Jewish genocide, it was inflicted or countenanced by their brethren of the Book. In case of the Armenian genocide, it is incomprehensible that their own ‘brothers of the faith’ maintained studied silence, when they were being

murdered by the Ottoman butchers! As Ambassador Morgenthau feelingly said about the unspeakable horrors of the Armenian tragedy, *“Undoubtedly, religious fanaticism was an impelling motive with the Turkish and the Kurdish rabble who slew Armenians as a service to Allah, but the men who really conceived the crime had no such motive. Practically all of them were atheists, with no more respect for Mohammedanism than for Christianity, and with them the one motive was cold-blooded, calculating state policy.”*

There are 193 members of the UN, 56 Islamic and 137 non-Islamic. Of the 137 non-Islamic members, only 30-odd countries have acknowledged the reality of the Armenian genocide.



Plaque at Ghent University's library, Credit: Belgian archives

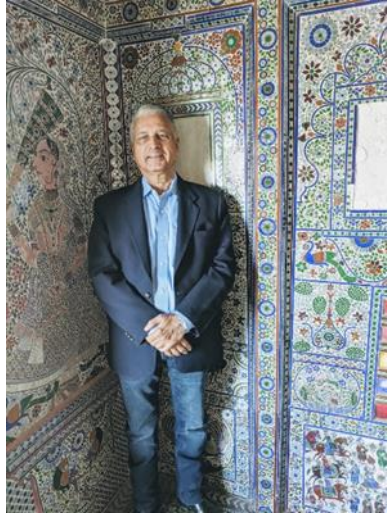


Mother's Hands Monument in memory, Credit: varoujan.net

Daniel Varoujan (1884 –1915) the internationally acclaimed Armenian poet was shot dead by the Turkish police when he was 31. His poem on genocide:

*What is the red liquid?  
Flowing through the bodies of people and animals?  
We should let doctors decide  
If a bleeding person feels real pain or not.  
History is a pristine mummy of someone who bled to death.  
Statistics don't lie, but they also don't feel.  
What is killing people because you hate who they are?  
We should let history decide,  
If the massacre of Armenians is genocide or not.  
Blood is an extinct history,  
Faithfully written by losers.  
Honest pain exaggerates facts,  
But its humanity never shuns the truth!*





Suren Khirwadkar has a Master's degree in Political Science from Northwestern University, Chicago and a Bachelor's degree in Laws from Vikram University, Ujjain.

He has three decades of management experience with Hindustan Unilever, Colgate-Palmolive, Britannia and Citibank in different geographies.

He lives in Pune with his wife, Surekha.

[suren.khirwadkar@yahoo.com](mailto:suren.khirwadkar@yahoo.com), [khirwadkarsuren@hotmail.com](mailto:khirwadkarsuren@hotmail.com)